PARSEC

the alternate view of sci-fi

INSIDE:
Space: the Imagination Station's schedule

Babylon 5's Peter Jurasik

SPAWN CREATOR TODD MCFARLANE

FINAL CONFLICT'S FIRST JARIDIAN: ANDREW JACKSON AND LATEST CAST MEMBER JAYNE HEITMEYER

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Toronto 2003 gets new chair

The board of directors of Toronto World Science Fiction Convention in 2003 has appointed Peter Jarvis as convention chairman of Torcon 3, should Toronto be selected as the site of the 61st World Science Fiction Convention.

Jarvis

A native of Montreal, Jarvis resides in Hamilton, Ont. Jarvis has served as the vice-chairman of the bid committee and as the chairman of the bid's publications committee.

Further information on the bid, is available at **www.torcon3.on.ca**, or write to P.O. Box 3, Station A, Toronto, Ont., Canada M5W 1A2. Specific questions can be emailed to info@torcon3.on.ca or to penneys42@hotmail.com.

Hammer Films raised from dead

News reports say Hammer Films, Britain's master of Gothic horror movies, will be resurrected after a media consortium agreed to acquire the movie company and turn it into a multimedia horror enterprise.

Hammer Films will return to horror production, by enhancing the old-style gore it was renowned for with digital technology.

Hammer's new owners include Charles Saatchi, co-founder of Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising; Larry Chrisfield, chairman of the British Film Commission; and Rob Dickins, chairman of the British Phonographic Industry.

Hammer's new owners bought the house of horror and its substantial library of films and TV programs from majority shareholder Roy Skeggs.

GOT NEWS?
send it to
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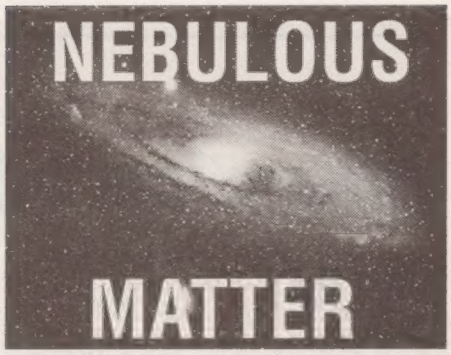

Site celebrates Canadian sci-fi

Science fiction fan Don Bassie has launched Made in Canada — a website that features Canadian science fiction in all of its forms.

The site includes individual entries to more than 50 published authors like Robert J. Sawyer, Robert Charles Wilson, Spider Robinson and William Gibson, as well as more than 40 actor entries including Keanu Reeves, Jim Carrey, Carrie-Anne Moss and Michael J. Fox.

The filmmaker section includes James Cameron and David Cronenburg and the Other Media is a mixed bag with more than 20 entries including the Parsec, the movie Heavy Metal and the rock group Rush.

Made in Canada can be found at **www.geocities.com/canadian_sf**

Peanutpress, DAW form alliance

Science fiction fans now have a new reason to flock to electronic publisher, peanutpress.com's site.

A recent agreement reached between the well-known science fiction and fantasy publisher, DAW Books, Inc. and peanutpress.com results in best-selling titles from high-profile authors being available electronically through the peanutpress.com site, the two companies announced today. Works from

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desouza

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Parsec, volume 3 number 5
Publications Mail Registration No. 09937
Canada Post Publishers Agreement No. 1711121
UPC — 56698-71606-05
Parsec is published by the Parsec Publishing Company, c/o Plaza 69 Post Office, 1935 Paris St. Box 21019, Sudbury, Ont., Canada, P3E 6G6

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Newsstand rates (not including applicable taxes): six issues — $25.50, twelve issues — $51.

For advertising information please call (705) 523-1831 or fax (705) 523-5276.
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Where has all the time gone?

As we were putting the finishing touches on this issue, the final ballot for the Prix Aurora Awards showed up.

For readers who live outside the borders of Canada, the awards are this nation's national speculative fiction awards. In the same way the Hugo and Nebula awards recognize the accomplishments of those in science fiction, fantasy and horror across the globe, the Auroras recognize achievements in both official languages in literature, art, media and organizational work by Canadian professionals and by fans in the areas of science fiction and fantasy.

This marks the fourth consecutive year that Parsec has been amongst the finalists in the Best Work in English (Other) category. And judging by the field, remaining a bridesmaid when the awards are announced July 15 wouldn't come as a surprise.

But this is the first time that Parsec has managed to place two short stories among the finalists. Mark Rayner's Any Port in a Storm and Mark Leslie's Erratic Cycles were among the top nominees for Best Short Form Work in English. There they will be up against the likes of Robert J. Sawyer and Robert Charles Wilson.

As well, artist Terry Pallot — whose supplied illustrations for Parsec since our first issue is also up for his first Aurora Award. His nomination was for his artwork which accompanied the short story, Accelerator. **For a complete list of the finalists, please see page 61.**

While I have concerns over the future of the awards — given the chronic low turnout of voters — every year when I see the final ballot, I realize just how diverse and how dynamic the speculative fiction community is in Canada.

☆ ☆ ☆

It was around Christmas time when the realization came to me.

"Holy sh-t (deletion for the faint of heart)!" I exclaimed to my wife Donna. "July's gonna be ("going to be" for the literary faint of heart) our fifth anniversary."

Donna, who doubles as Parsec's financial watchdog, smiled —business loans are paid off in the coming year, burdens eased, plans can be pursued and all will be well with the world.

I, on the other hand, have more mundane things to consider . . . like how are we going to celebrate?

Well, needless to say, there will be a celebration of sorts at Toronto Trek 2000 (details are still be worked out). Why Toronto Trek? Well, there are a number of reasons.

First off, it's the largest science fiction convention in Canada. Secondly, we launched Parsec at the convention in 1995 and it only seems appropriate that we celebrate there. And third, it was six years ago that I conducted an interview with Majel Barrett Roddenberry that started the ball rolling that ended with Parsec's birth.Seems there wasn't a publication interested in purchasing the piece, so I started my own.

For those who love the symmetry of life, six years after Barrett Roddenberry's interview, her son (collaborating with Issac Szpindel) will be publishing a short story in Parsec.

It's a great way to cap off our first half-decade and set the stage for the second half.

Til next time
Chris

Aurora Awards walking corpse

Dear Editor:

I read with interest your editorial in the last issue of Parsec. I agree with your overall criticism of the Aurora Awards and I applaud your temerity in publicly tackling this ailing "sacred cow." Nonetheless, despite your assertion that "this year's Aurora Award was a debacle," I think you were still too cautiously, too politely, Canadian in your overall assessment.

The Aurora Awards are terminally ill. Never terribly healthy to begin with, heroic measures are now needed to save it. The Auroras may not die this year or even the next, but they are a walking corpse. A zombie if you will, mindless and pretty much purposeless.

Mindless? Purposeless? Well, there are four people on the Aurora committee every year, and three of them remain pretty constant. Your editorial points out that last year's eligibility list was late because one of the committee members was injured in a fall. It does not point out that the three remaining committee members seemed to slack off rather than take up the slack. The eligibility list appeared just a few short weeks prior to the vote — a full nine months after the turn of the year. Why? What is so difficult in compiling a list of eligible works? Why wasn't it available early in the year before the summer when one of the committee members fell ill?

Has the committee learned anything from last year? As of this writing, March 6, the following appears on the Aurora Award website:

"Last update: Feb. 26. Next Update Feb. 29.

This year's host is TT2000, July 14-16, 2000.

Eligibility list

A preliminary eligibility list for some of the categories should be available on this site by March 1. Mailing deadline for nominations is March 31, 2000."

My memory is not infallible, but that is at least the fourth self-imposed deadline missed this year. And with less than four weeks to go before the point becomes moot. So today, March 6, just before I put this letter in the mail, I went back to check. The notice had changed; it now said that the last update was March 5 and that the eligibility list would be posted on March 7.

Just between you and me, I saw not evidence of an update between then and now and if you believe the part about posting the eligibility list, I have a bridge in Brooklyn . . .

The voting results clearly reflect this regionalism which only diminishes its credibility as a national award.

But this is just recent history. I'm not going to detail events, not so long ago, when the committee forgot to stay in touch with the trophy designer and manufacturer. That's why one year, recently, clear plastic trophies, made at the last minute, were handed out instead of the brilliantly designed, but dangerous, trophy we all love. Nor will I recount in nauseating detail the countless award recipients who had to wait months, in one case years, before the committee mailed them their trophy.

This particular incarnation of the committee seems to have forgotten that the award ceremony was designed to alternate between the east and west. The ceremonies have remained in the east for the last three years. The voting results reflect this regionalism which only diminishes its credibility as a national award.

If I had the inclination, I'd fill pages with what is now wrong with the awards. But I don't have the inclination and I am responding to your editorial which suggests remedies. Let's take them one at a time.

You suggest that the size of the organizing committee be increased. You also state that "one member says they want new blood."

News to me. There was no call for new blood at the last business meeting. There was no call for new members on the website. There has been no such call, not even a whisper, of this on any of Canada's sf newsgroups or list serves. Rather than call for some new blood, why not replace the entire committee? I hardly doubt that the Auroras, as they are presently constituted, would suffer at all and, hopefully, a totally new committee would reinvigourate the venerable award.

If this sounds unfair or harsh to the existing committee, so be it. They have done good work in the past, but they are no longer doing so. In fact, it is difficult to see what work they are doing. They should be thanked and applauded for the good they've willingly done. But now, perhaps, a totally new organizing group is the better remedy.

You suggest scrapping the rotation system. I'd agree if only there existed in Canada a healthy literary sf convention or even a healthy general sf convention.

That animal is either extinct or hibernating and your recommendation of Toronto Trek flies wide of the mark.

TT is a media convention and, despite its sometimes shrill claims to the contrary, has no literary credibility whatsoever. True, it is Canada's largest and healthiest fan-run convention, but that is hardly enough to make it a good choice for a set of awards that have traditionally been viewed as literary. I think a better answer is to move it out west and re-instate the rotation system.

Easy solutions do not exist. But if effective remedies are not undertaken, and soon, the award will become a joke to the world at large and not just to those of us who realize that a handful of nominations and a couple of handfuls of votes are enough to "win" a "coveted" national award.

T.M. Driverman
Toronto

Email your letters to:
editorial@parsec.on.ca

Life with Londo

Actor Peter Jurasik, with stints on Hill Street Blues, Third Rock From the Sun and numerous other productions, has a resume that is the envy of any in the profession. For five seasons, he relished the over-the- top role of Londo Mollari

Photo courtesy of Warner Brothers

by Chris Krejlgaard

On Babylon 5, Peter Jurasik chewed up the scenery as Londo Mollari, the Centauri ambassador who always pursued his own agenda and ended up at the top of his race's power structure.

Off-camera, Jurasik is as far removed from the bombastic character as you can imagine.

As roles go, Londo provided a wealth of fertile ground for any actor. Jurasik was quick to recognize the depth of the character and the possibilities he presented.

"I was immediately attracted to the role," Jurasik recalls. "They sent me the script for The Gathering (the television movie which served as the series' pilot) and I walked into the house and told my wife, 'I want this role'."

It was something that was out of character for the veteran actor. Usually, Jurasik explained, he reads scripts or auditions for a role and adopts a laissez faire approach to landing the job.

Parsec photo

Londo, with what Jurasik says was a juxtaposition of "who he seems to be and who he really is," was just too good an opportunity for Jurasik to pass up.

"Looking back, it was the bitter place that the character starts in. He's in an incredibly embittered place in his life and, yet, he is the guy who's stuck out on this outpost, who basically plays for a living.

"He spends his time gambling and chasing girls and drinks too much. Yet his soul is completely ravaged and hurting."

It was an assessment Jurasik made based on the three scenes Londo had in the movie. The one scene which hooked Jurasik was when Londo talks to Security Officer Garibaldi and describes Centauri Prime as an "amusement park that's open from nine to five."

Besides the hairstyle, the one aspect which made Londo distinct on a station filled with different races was his voice.

"I called Mary Jo Slater who was the head of casting and asked her what they wanted me to sound like, she asks Joe (creator J. Michael Straczynski) and Joe said 'He can sound however he wants'."

Since I was the first Centauri, I could make him sound any way I want and no critic was going to come up and say 'that's not what a Centauri sounds like'."

Being the first Centauri (and having the creator's blessing), meant that Jurasik could make Londo sound however he wanted to.

The end result was an amalgam from across Jurasik's life.

"There's was the parole officer in Clockwork Orange who kept saying, 'and night time is the best time isn't it Alex m'boy," there was a resonance in his voice that I just love.

"I have a Slovakian grandmother who had a tone in her voice that sounded a little like Transylvania and I spent a few summers in Ireland , so there was an Irish edge to some pronunciations and in rhythms."

Adding to the mix was Jurasik's pique at a critic who lambasted his Memphis accent in a Tennessee Williams play shortly before he auditioned for Londo.

Photo courtesy of Warner Brothers

Peter Jurasik had shot 15 pilots for television — including such memorable ones as Beverly Hills Buntz — before landing the role of Londo. But because of his (and actor Andreas Katsulas's (K'Nar, opposite page) asking price, the two were only signed for 13 episodes during the first two seasons.

"I worked really hard on it and I really took my time to get the accent correct and there were a lot of people who said they thought it was perfect, but there was one particular critic who slammed it.

"I was reacting from that when I got this role. Since I was the first Centauri, I could make him sound any way I want and no critic was going to come up and say 'that's not what a Centauri sounds like'."

Still Jurasik knew at the time that the odds of the movie becoming a series were long.

"I had been in 15 television pilots and only two or three were picked up," he said. "In addition, this was a sci fi piece and, at that point, you needed a network."

Even when it beat the odds, there was still a barrier that had to be overcome — money.

Both Jurasik and Andreas Katsulas who played (Ambassador G'Kar) had been in the business a long time and their prices were a little high for a fledgling series with no network backing.

"They didn't have the money to meet our quotes as actors, since Andreas and I are old coots in Hollywood and our money is up."

So the two of them were signed for just 13 episodes in the first two seasons.

Jurasik and the other cast members also enjoyed a measure of creative security on the series. Straczynski assured them, provided through his famed five-year story arc, that he knew where their characters were heading over the course of the series.

"It was a unique situation where Joe had this five-year arc," Jurasik explained. "So, as an actor, you really had to have a great idea to go in to him and say. 'I think I want to change your arc here'."

Straczynski also encouraged Jurasik to "hit the extremes of the character.

"So in the first season we set the character up as comedic and a source of ridicule knowing that the pendulum was going to swing back in the second season."

So Straczynski and Jurasik pushed the pendulum out as far as possible.

The end result, was that the transformation during the series' run was more dramatic.

Londo, with a more theatrical approach to life, also represented a bit of a challenge and a departure from the characters Jurasik had portrayed in other television productions.

"Londo was unique in that he is a tremendously energetic character. It's not like when you play someone who is evil or plotting in a play for a couple of months.

"You eventually find yourself having to pull yourself out of the muck of the kind of bad place of the character.

"With Londo, you couldn't have a slow day. I couldn't come to work and not be up for Londo because he is not a mellow guy."

The character's high energy level also forced Jurasik to adjust his approach to acting — he was constantly trying to get away from the character during breaks on the set.

"I have nowhere near the level of energy Londo has."

By way of comparison, Jurasik pointed to Katsulas who remained in character from the time his make up was applied to the time it was removed.

Enhancing the transformation and Jurasik's performance was the fact that while he was aware of where Londo was heading in the overall arc, he didn't know the minutiae of the progress.

"Joe asked me if I wanted to see the bible (Straczynski's mapping of the series' storyline), and basically what I told him was that if he could give me an idea of where one season at a time was going, that would be good enough for me.

"It's not unlike our own lives. You really don't want to know where it's going, because if we did, it would ruin this moment."

Since leaving the role of Londo, Jurasik has made appearances on other science fiction programs. As of late, he's had recurring roles on Sliders and Third Rock From the Sun.

Of the Sliders' character, Jurasik said: "It was an interesting character, but he was a little too dark and a little too Machiavellian for my tastes."

But with the end of production on Babylon 5, Jurasik finds he has gained the ability to pick and choose some of the roles.

"So I didn't want to do too many more of those kinds of characters."

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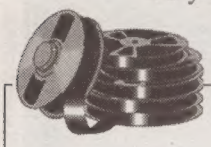


FILMOGRAPHY

MOVIES:

Enemy Mine
Tron
Straight Time

TELEVISION:

M*A*S*H
Taxi
Hill Street Blues
Third Rock from the Sun
Barney Miller
Night Court
Sliders
The Late Shift

Actor for the millennium

Toronto-based Andrew Jackson watched a pet-store lizard for a couple of hours as research for his task in helping create an alien race for Earth: Final Conflict. The result?

. . . a Jaridian

Photo courtesy of Alliance Atlantis

In his career, Andrew Jackson has trod the boards at the Stratford Festival and has taken Lisa Howard hostage to the far ends of the galaxy.

Diverse is the word that best sums up Andrew Jackson's acting career.

The Newmarket, Ont., native has taken on roles in Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies, roles in television movies such as The Last Don and on series such as the Highlander and Earth: Final Conflict.

"My big criteria is that I like to play a wide range of things and explore as many different genres in this business as possible," Jackson said during some recent break between jobs.

And he's explored pretty much every genre since he caught the acting bug when he played the old pickpocket in a high-school production of Oliver. After the show finished, teachers praised his performance and pushed him toward acting.

"I approached my mother when I finished high school and said 'this is something I want to do'," Jackson recalls. "She presented some statistics of the average wage for an actor and said 'if you're prepared to accept that, then you go right ahead and do it'."

The statistics were a little discouraging for the teenager, but Jackson decided that he would try to make a living from the profession until he was 30. At that point, if he wasn't satisfied with his progress, then he would move on.

He's been more than satisfied with his success.

After graduating high school, he attended the National Theatre School and received a master's degree in English literature at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ont.,— where he also performed in a number productions at the school.

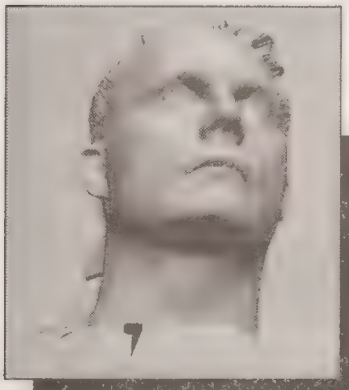
Since leaving McMaster, Jackson spent five years performing in the theatre, including stints at Stratford.

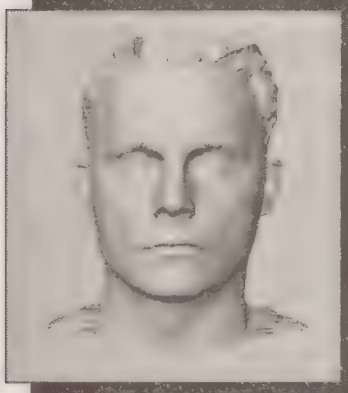
His big break came when he landed the role as Dr. Stephen Hammill on the soap, All My Children. It was a role he filled for two seasons, before returning to Canada and taking on movies and television work.

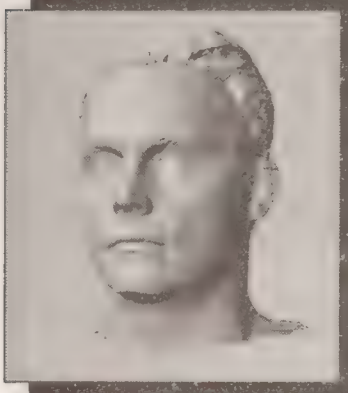
He's appeared in such films as Bram Stoker's Shadowbuilder and Blackjack and on such television series as Psi Factor, Charmed (where he played an evil warlock), Highlander: the Raven, Friday the 13th the series and Earth: Final Conflict.

"I just like to be stimulated by as many different characters as possible," Jackson said.

But some of the stimulation that he gained during his career, playing the Shadowbuilder wasn't entire-







In Millennium Man, Jackson tackles three roles — one good, one, evil and one that's well, an electronic stump. When he goes into action, the Millennium Man loses his human appearance.

ly positive.

Playing a demon had an effect on him.

"We dabbled in some pretty dark areas in the film and there were certainly things that people of Christian faith would say were bordering on sacrilege," he explained.

The heavy prosthetics that Jackson wore for his role as a demon in the Shadowbuilder helped prepare for his stint as the original Jaridian — the enemy of the enigmatic Taelons — on Earth: Final Conflict.

"I love masks," the actor said of the prothestics he was required to wear for the two roles. "I find them quite liberating. The result of a mask being placed on my face for a project called Specimen, was that I discovered a whole other side to my work as an actor."

Jackson also took some of the darkness of his Shadowbuilder character and infused it into the Jaridian.

"What I took from that part and applied to the Jaridian was the darkness and I allowed him to find his redemption through the humanity of the character," Jackson said.

Since he was breaking new ground for the series, Jackson had the opportunity to put his mark on the character.

"It was an incredible opportunity for an actor who wants to be creative," Jackson said.

To prepare for the role, Jackson went to a Toronto pet store and watched lizards for a few hours. He then incorporated their movements and sounds into the character. It was an approach which concerned producers — until they saw the first day's rushes.

"They were thrilled," Jackson said.

Introduced in the second-season episode, The Gauntlet, Jackson's character was being held aboard the Taelon mother ship. The alien escaped from the cryogenics lab when a power surge interfered with his containment tank.

He escaped with Captain Lili Marquette (Lisa Howard).

Pursued by Major Liam Kincaid (Robert Leeshock), the two crafts disappeared into inter-dimensional space, both Lili and Liam's shuttles were drawn into a huge alien vessel.

When they finally escape from the vessel, Kincaid puts the Jaridian on board one shuttle with enough power to fly home. The Jaridian vowed to return to Earth to confront the Taelons.

"They've left the door open for the future," Jackson said.

"I've heard rumours and it certainly makes sense to bring me back."

Prothestics aside, the

Photo courtesy of Andrew Jackson

character provided Jackson with other challenges.

Described by producers as a villain, Jackson had to inject some texture into the character in order for it to resonate with the audience.

"The race is described by the Taelons as sinister, demonic, destructive and hateful. But at some point in the show, I have to show his humanity. And he actually turns out to be someone who is quite passionate and caring," Jackson explained.

Most recently, Jackson played the lead in the Millennium Man.

The television movie, which has yet to be aired by a Canadian broadcaster, was created by Glen Larson and could be picked up as a series.

The movie is an update of another Larson creation, The Six-Million-Dollar Man. (Larson also was at the helm of cult-favourite Battlestar Galactica).

In the Millennium Man, Jackson plays a dual role as Adam (which stands for Advanced Design Anatomical Man) and Adaman — as well as a third role as a mindless "demo"

Continued on page 67

Photo courtesy of Alliance/Atlantis and Andrew Jackson

As Earth: Final Conflict's first Jaridian, Jackson played an influential role in the development of the alien race which is the bane of the Taelons' existence.

anime north

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the new kid

Final Conflict producers find 'personification of cool'

By Chris Krejlgaard

One of the changes in the third season of Gene Roddenberry's Earth: Final Conflict has been the addition of Jayne Heitmeyer.

Heitmeyer plays Renee Palmer, a cut-throat resistance fighter, who runs the division at Doors International which specializes in joint ventures with the Taelons.

The addition of a female character was made necessary when actress Lisa Howard (Lilli Marquette) asked to have her workload eased while she was pregnant. Her character continues to appear during the course of the season.

"We looked at a lot of women and looked at Jayne's work," explained series executive producer David Kirschner. "She dyed her hair blonde and had the personification of a cool Hitchcock woman from the Cold War years.

"There's a coolness and a confidence to the character."

Heitmeyer said Palmer is a deeper character than se initially appears.

"There's a dichotomy to the character.

"She has a double agenda. She a very strong female role model.

"She's very powerful both physically and mentally and very passionate about her beliefs.

"But there's a dark side to her."

The many layers of the character provide fertile ground for the actress to explore — with the help of the series' writer.

Kirschner pointed out that Palmer introduces a juxtaposition to the series' lead character of Liam Kincaid.

Even after a few episodes, Heitmeyer had already put

Jayne Heitmeyer started out as a model before a choclate bar commercial brought her into the world of acting. This season she has taken on the role of Renee Palmer on Earth: Final Conflict

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"The writers are often on set when we're shooting, this is a very strong character that I wouldn't want to mess with anyway, but they are very open to ideas."

her stamp on the character and they share many of the same traits, according to Kirschner.

"I'm lucky because it's an established show, they were very supportive and the writing is solid," Heitmeyer said of her joining the series. "I've got a terrific character who's a lot of fun to play and is interesting to play. There's a lot of layers to her.

"You sort of look for those characters as an actor."

But even with such a character to work with, joining an established show with a cast that's already worked together for two seasons was still a little daunting.

Making things easier was the cast.

"They were all very open and supportive," she said.

After reading for the part in Toronto, Heitmeyer was flown to Los Angeles for another read, although this time it was with Robert Leeshak, and under the gaze of co-executive producer Majel Barrett Roddenberry

"I think they wanted to see if we had any kind of chemistry happening, because our characters are together a lot," she recalls."And they wanted to have some kind of tension between the characters, so there's an attraction, but at the same time they don't know how far they can trust each other.

"And things clicked."

Even though the series' writers had provided the framework for the character of Renee Palmer and for the tension with Kincaid, Heitmeyer says the writing staff is willing to hear suggestions from the actors.

"The writers are often on set when we're shooting, this is a very strong character that I wouldn't want to mess with anyway, but they are very open to ideas."

Over the course of her first season, Heitmeyer hopes that the writers will begin to probe her character's darker side.

Landing such a key role on an

Because they would be sharing the screen a great deal, Heitmeyer and Leeshak read together during a Los Angeles session to see if they had any "chemistry happening."

Lexx launches third season

What was a few months for fans, turns out to be 4,000 years for the crew of the LEXX.

At the end of LEXX II, the crew put themselves into cryostatis animation. LEXX III begins with the crew awakening 4,000 years later and finding themselves in the middle of an interplanentary war between planets dubbed "Fire and Water."

The 13-episode season will focus on the crew's attempts to survive the war and get out of the galaxy. And, as is the norm on LEXX, things are destroyed, sex is rampant and general mayhem ensues.

The main characters — Stanley Tweedle, Xev, Kai and 790 will all return to the series. But the third season will see the addition of Nigel Bennett as Prince, Anna-Kathrin Bleuler as May, Ralph Brown as Duke, Louise Wischermann as Lyekka, Dieter Laser as Mantrid and Ellen Dubin as Gigerotta.

LEXX airs on Space: the Imagination Station Mondays at 9 p.m.

established series (with a commitment for a fourth season already) is just the latest step in the relatively brief acting career for the Montreal native.

Heitmeyer's film and television career was launched after she was cast in the 1992-96 national advertising campaign for Crispy Crunch.

Auditions

It was enough to whet the model's appetite for the craft and in 1994, she landed a leading role in Sirens.

"I think they were reading everyone in town," she said of the auditions.

Since then she has landed roles in projects which range from comedic to dramatic and to action-oriented.

CREDITS

MOVIES:
Pursuit
Lost World

TELEVISION:
NightMan
The Outer Limits
Are You Afraid of the Dark?
FX: The Series
Total Recall 2070

She has co-starred in the action series NightMan. She has also guest starred on such hit series as The Outer Limits, Are You Afraid of the Dark?, FX: The Series, The Hunger, Student Bodies and Total Recall 2070.

"I like to keep all the doors open and auditioning as much as I can," she said of her varied roles. "

Heitmeyer says she fell into acting.

"I firmly believed that it was important to get an education first," she explained.

While enrolled in the education program at McGill University, Heitmeyer attended a number of workshops and learned that acting was the career choice for her.

"I was very lucky the way things worked out for me, in terms of getting 'that big break'," she adds.

Even though she's never used her teaching degree, Heitmeyer explained that many of the same disciplines — memorization skills and presentation skills, for example — are shared by educators and actors.

"The degree didn't go to waste, it (an education) just gives you more to bring to the table."

☆

Joining an established show could be a daunting task for many actors. But Heitmeyer says the support she received from other cast members such as Robert Leeshak (right) and Richard Chevolleau made the transition easier.

"I was very lucky the way things turned out, in terms of getting 'that big break'."

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Belly up to the space bar

Space channel's Dennis McGrath offers viewers some shots of bartender's insight into the world of science fiction every Saturday

Dennis McGrath is the perfect bartender.

He knows all visitors to his establishment by name, he can offer bits of trivia and, if push came to shove, could probably mix a mean margarita.

So what if his bar is a few quadrants out in space?

McGrath is the host of the Space Bar seen Saturday nights on Space: the Imagination Station.

Space Bar serves as the focal point for the science fiction channel's Saturday night movie block. It is also one of the few parts of the channel's offerings that is developed at the Toronto station.

"Space has very much acquisition-driven programming which is very different for this building," McGrath explained earlier this month. "In this regard, it's very different from the CityTv and MuchMusic where a lot of the programming is done at 299 Queen Street."

The Space Bar is now in it's second season as a mainstay on the Canadian specialty channel.

Since late 1998, McGrath and his five-member team have spent four hours every couple of weeks shooting enough segments to handle two or three movies.

And this doesn't include such things as conducting research and writing the segments. On top of this, McGrath also writes and produces the channel's Conspiracy Guy segments, as well as teaches media writing part-time at Ryerson University and writes plays and films (his film, Shooter, is scheduled to air on Showcase).

For the Space Bar, McGrath drew on the movie programs he grew up with for his inspiration.

These programs featured a host who shared information about a particular film or an actor as a means of introducing a movie or as a diversion from the commercial.

"It's not a new concept in any way, shape or form," McGrath notes, adding that he also drew on more contemporary monster movie hosts — Joe Bob Briggs and Count Floyd.

Briggs is the host of MonsterVision on the U.S. channel, TNT, while Count Floyd holds a unique place in Canadian television and needs no further exposition — at least

Photo courtesy of Space: the Imagination Station

Producer/ host Dennis McGrath and Simon 090491 who's handled by former MuchMusic veejay Simon Evans, dispense tidbits of information during the Space channel's Saturday night movie block.

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for anyone who watches SCTV.

"I thought it would be a nice thing to revive," McGrath said of his role as host of the Space Bar.

But, more by design than by chance, the segments are tied closer to the contemporary hosts than those of the '50s and '60s.

"What I wanted to do was to try and get something in there that was kind of fun and offer some sort of personality to the station," McGrath explained. "I also wanted it to speak to that side of fandom that is a little obsessive and really interested in the minutia, the trivia and the real inside things that are going on inside the movies."

"What I wanted to do was to try and get something in there that was kind of fun and offer some sort of personality to the station."

The lack of available funds dictated the quality of the set and the special effects.

"Then we had to decide who was going to hang out in the bar," McGrath recalls. "You'd probably have an alien and you'd probably have a robot.

"I'm a big believer in character interactions and having things grow out of character."

So the two characters were created to portray two ends of the spectrum with McGrath's bartender playing between them.

The robot, Simon 090491, is handled by associate producer (and former MuchMusic veejay Simon Evans.

The other character, Grot, is a barfly with an affinity for darts, MacGyver and the Sacred Order of the Guttenberg.

The lack of funds also meant that McGrath became the bartender.

"If we were going to pay someone, then we would have gotten an actor.

"I've done comedy in the past and I'm not going to do something that's going to stray too far from me," he said.

"So I decided that the bartender was going to be someone who, most of the time, will be the voice of reason."

Early on, the segments were done as if the audience was simply eavesdropping on the goings on.

But after the first month, McGrath and the other members of the creative team decided to bring the audience into the show and become more self-aware.

Besides the regulars, the Space Bar has also been a destination for celebrity guests such as Claudia Christian and Brent Spiner — who decided to be Jeff Goldblum all night.

"We really try to get the guests who reflect that sort of sci-fi audience that we're after," he said.

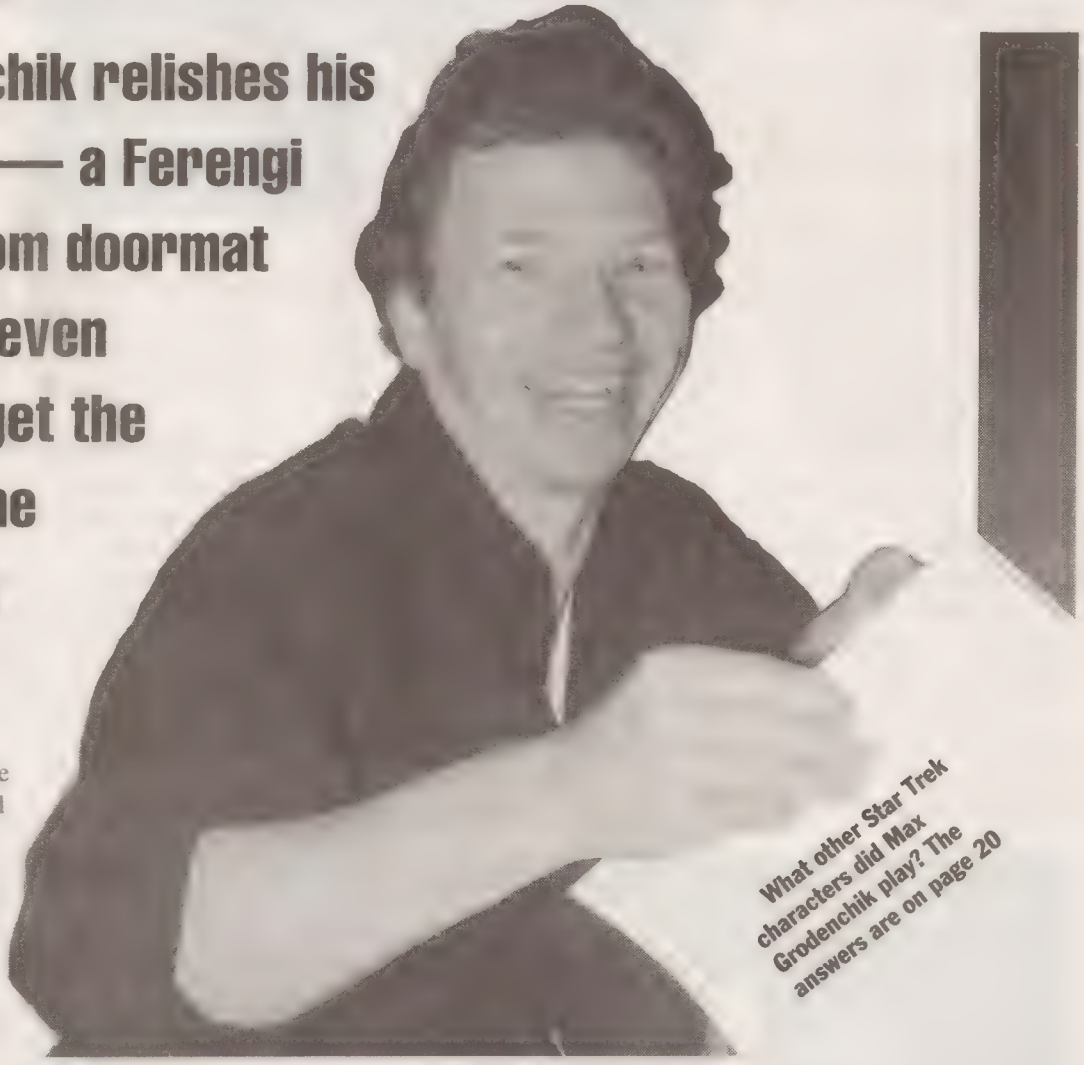
"You have to get someone who understands that this is really informal and that there's a different tone to it."

After the channel moves into its new quarters this year, McGrath said the format of the segments will likely change and guests may play a more prominent role at the bar.

☆

Deep Space Nine's unlikely ruler

Max Grodenchik relishes his time as Rom — a Ferengi who goes from doormat to ruler and even manages to get the girl before the series ended its run



What other Star Trek characters did Max Grodenchik play? The answers are on page 20

Max Grodenchik takes the microphone off the table and glances around the room.

"The interview needs a prologue," he says, looking back with a smile. "Now batting . . . ing . . . ing for Jake Sisk o . o . o . o., number nine . . . Rommmmm."

Even after Star Trek: Deep Space Nine halted production, Grodenchik clearly relishes his time with fans and celebrate his character, Rom.

Like most long-standing characters, Rom was the result of a collaborate effort between the actor and the creative team behind the camera.

"Every actor brings something unique to a role to make it come alive," Grodenchik explained, adding that over the course of a series, the development of a character is a symbiosis between the actors and the show's writers.

"I think the writers pick up on what the actor brings and they expand on it. They see what's working and what's not working for them."

Grodenchik looks back on the development of his character and points to specific areas which he brought to the character — the sense of isolation, of being left out and the almost futile effort to "be the best Ferengi he can.

"Rom was trying to find his true self. And, in many ways, that's the same thing that I'm going through."

"He was a Ferengi, who wasn't very good at being a Ferengi," Grodenchik said. "And in that lies the same feeling as a human in the 20th century United States, where people feel a step behind everyone else."

During the course of the show's seven seasons, Rom changes as he comes in contact with the different beliefs of the races visiting the space station.

So that by the end of the series, he is no longer the doormat for his brother, Quark, and ended the series

as the chosen successor for the Ferengi homeworld and even managed to get the girl — in the form of Leeta, the dabogirl.

In some ways, Grodenchik says, the evolution is much like the way his own life has progressed.

The Bronx, N.Y., native grew up in a household where he was expected to follow a certain career path — banking.

Grodenchik worked in banks (ironically, at one point, in the mergers and acquisitions department) while he struggled to get his acting career started. When he was offered a chance to pursue a career in banking, he decided acting was where his future lay.

"What are those voices in your head that points you in the right direction or in any direction?" Grodenchik asked rhetorically.

"When they asked me to work in banks, I struggled with that. I decided that the career was good for some one else and that I want to pursue this acting thing."

A member of the Circle Repertory Actors Lab in New York and of the Company of Angels in Los Angeles, Grodenchik began his career at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco (Sam Shepard was playwright-in-residence) and has played on regional theatre stages across the United States from the Yale Repertory to the Guthrie Theatre to the Mark Taper Forum.

Leeta and Rom are shocked at the announcement that the waste extraction engineer has been named Grand Nagus. Rom was only one of the roles Max Grodenchik played in the Star Trek universe.

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Grodenchik tried to bring his own feelings about unappealing preselected career paths to his Star Trek character.

"Rom was trying to find his true self. And, in many ways, that's the same thing that I'm going through."

If there was any unfinished business with his character when the Deep Space Nine went off the air, Grodenchik says he would have liked to have had the opportunity to explore those parts of Rom's personality and what beliefs he had to give up to fit in.

Like a handful of other actors, Grodenchik has played many roles in the Star Trek universe.

Besides Rom, he played the Ferengi,Sovak, in the episode Captain's Holiday on Star Trek: The Next Generation. He followed the appearance up with one as Par Lenor in episode, The Perfect Mate.

The two appearances led to his selection as Quark's woeful brother on Deep Space Nine.

Grodenchik also landed the part as a Bak'u security officer in Star Trek: Insurrection.

Even though his career seems inexorably tied to Star Trek, Grodenchik has managed to accumulate a sizeable acting resume.

He was shot by Harvey Keitel in Sister Act, was twisted to death in the Rocketeer, worked on the ground crew in Apollo 13 and starred in the horror movie Rumplestilskin. On television, he tried to murder John Laroquette on Night Court (because Dan made fun of Grodenchik's character's buck teeth)and has made appearances on Tales From the Crypt.

☆

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Without Okrand, Klingons would be speechless

Linguist took four lines and developed an entire language for the Star Trek universe

By Chris Krejlgaard

Parsec photo

Mark Okrand didn't create the first words of Klingon, they were written by James Doohan and spoken by Mark Lenard in Star Trek: The Motion Picture. It's a point the linguist says annoys Klingons to no end.

Mark Okrand has fulfilled a linguist's dream. He's created a language.

Not just some theoretical sampling of syntax mind you, but a vibrant language that is in wide use across the world. Okrand is the creator of Klingon.

Klingon, which can twist the tongue of even the most fluent of terrans, had its roots in the first Star Trek movie in 1979. Then it consisted of a few sentences at the beginning of the movie as three Klingons went disrupter to disintegrator with V'Ger. And lost.

The words were written by actor James Doohan (Scotty) and spoken by actor Mark Lenard (Sarek) — a point, Okrand says, annoys Klingons to no end.

While the use of the Klingon language didn't extend beyond a handful of lines in the movie, the cast had been set. Those words and sentence structures would provide the foundation for the new language — something which proved to be a hurdle for Okrand a few years down the road.

Okrand's involvement in the Star Trek universe and his key role in the development of Klingon was the result of coincidence.

During the filming of Star Trek II: the Wrath of Kahn, Okrand was in Hollywood visiting a friend. The friend was a secretary to the movie's executive producer Herve Bennett.

Over lunch, he learned that the producers were having trouble with the linguistic expert they had brought in from UCLA to write four lines of Vulcan.

After filming the scene between Saavik and Spock with the actors speaking English, the producers decided it would work better if the two characters spoke Vulcan.

Because of problems with the UCLA linguist, producers were facing a tight deadline. With a background in linguistics, Okrand was asked to solve the problem.

It also helped that Okrand had known Bennett and the two had discussed linguistics in the past.

By the end of the week, Okrand had finished the four lines for Saavik and Spock, as well as taught the actors how to pronounce the words and deliver the lines.

"I was halfway home when it hit me 'My god, 'I just taught Mr. Spock how to speak Vulcan'," Okrand chuckled.

During the week, Okrand watched the filmed scene and read the actors lips as they spoke their lines. From there, he used a mirror to help him formulate the

words which would fit the shape of the actors' mouths as they spoke. Once the job was completed, Okrand thought his involvement in Star Trek was done.

It was just starting.

When The Search for Spock began preproduction, Bennett made the decision to have the Klingons — who played a key element in the movie — speak as much of their own language as possible.

So they needed a language and one that included somewhat more words than were in the three lines in the first movie. Okrand was again enlisted.

"If there is a father of the language, Herve Bennett would be it," Okrand said. "I just fleshed out the details."

For The Search for Spock, Okrand took the sounds present in the earlier Klingon sentences and built new sounds and words from them and imposed a grammatical structure upon them.

"Unlike Vulcan, this time I could start from scratch and have some control," Okrand recalled. "It wasn't just having to match the lips, so I could make up rules and decide which direction to go."

At the time, Okrand simply provided enough language for the lines intended to be filmed in Klingon. After that, Bennett had him provide language for any lines spoken by Klingons in English.

This provided for more elements for the language.

During the ensuing years, more and more elements were added to the language as Okrand worked on more Star Trek movies and on a handful of episodes of the Next Generation series.

The end result was a Klingon dictionary which became a reference point for series' writers and eventually made it into bookstores.

However, the elements and rules that were created over the course of the movies seemed to create barriers for Okrand.

"There were times when I wondered why I came up with a certain rule or why I had a word sound a certain way, because by the fifth film, I was constrained by the rules that we had made up earlier," Okrand noted.

When he set out to develop the language, Okrand had a pair of goals.

The first was that it cannot sound like a human language, "because they're not human."

But it had to be familiar to human ears so that it sounded like a language in the audience and was easy for actors to learn.

Still Okrand violated some rules of human language by grouping sounds that aren't supposed to be grouped together. He also broke the natural order and adopted the least-used sentence structure to make Klingon sound different.

"All the elements of the Klingon language are present in our language, just not the way I used them." ☆

Marc Okrand's work with the Klingon language includes:

Star Trek III
Star Trek V
Star Trek VI
Episodes of:
The Next Generation
Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

The Klingon Dictionary
The audio cassettes:
Conversational Klingon
Power Klingon

Some Klingonese

HIje' - Feed me.	**jlqu' - I am fierce.**
nuQ - Bother	**lob - Obey**
blqur - You are greedy.	**qatlha' - I chase you.**
jup - Friend	**blqab - You are bad.**
jagh - Enemy	**jlQeH - I am angry.**
qaQan - I protect you.	**HoH - Kill**
jlSup - I jump.	**chomaw - You offend me.**
qayu' - I interrogate you.	**tlch - Insult**
jlqap - I insist.	**muS - Hate**
jlquv - I am honored.	**Suv - Fight**
qajey - I defeat you.	**jor - Explode**
jlnargh - I escape.	**DanlH - You steal it.**
pagh - Zero	**qaHoH - I kill you.**

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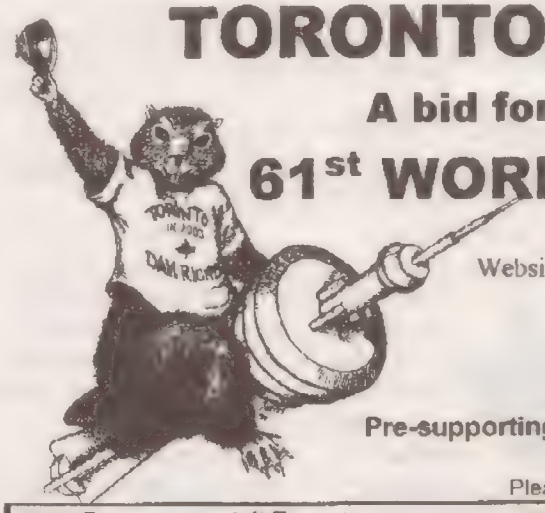

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What spawned success?

Angered by the comic industry's treatment of its talent, Todd McFarlane and some colleagues changed the face of the industry. Now, he'd like to shag some flies

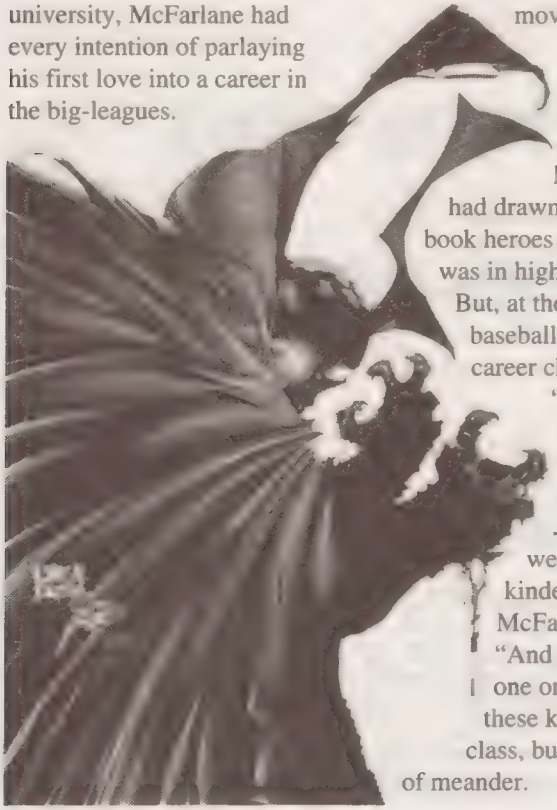
Photo courtesy of Todd McFarlane Productions

By
Chris Krejlgaard

As a baseball player, Todd McFarlane's gritty determination (as well as his speed and left-handed bat) got him a spot on Eastern Washington State University's team.

That same determination (some call it a rebellious streak) led the artist to become one of the founding members of Image Comics.

Before he broke his ankle sliding across home plate in university, McFarlane had every intention of parlaying his first love into a career in the big-leagues.



Now, McFarlane takes on a variety of entertainment projects with the same zeal as he did the basepaths some 20 years ago.

Todd McFarlane Productions publishes Spawn comic books, an impressive line of action figures based on both his creation and on movie tie-ins such as the Legend of Sleepy Hollow, as well as multi-media projects. The foundation for the company, Spawn, has also branched off into an animated series on the U.S. movie channel.

A self-taught artist, McFarlane had drawn comic book heroes while he was in high school. But, at the time, baseball was his career choice.

"I was the proverbial best artist in the class . . . and that went back to kindergarten," McFarlane said. "And you have one or two of these kids in every class, but we kind of meander.

"We just know we can draw. We don't know what we're going to do with it."

Comic books provided the focus — albeit some years later — for his artistic talents. Unlike other children, McFarlane didn't pick up comic books until he was 17. It was a life-changing moment which he can recall with remarkable clarity, except for one aspect —why then.

"All it was, that I was trying to figure out a way to focus my art on anything," he recalls.

Still, his attention was divided between his art and his love of baseball. The ankle injury forced him to become more committed to unlocking the mysteries of his art.

Part of the discovery processes involved taking art classes in college. While some aspects of his graphic arts courses built upon his own self-taught lessons, the experience was less-than pleasant for the Calgary-born artist.

"I got into a lot of screaming matches with a lot of my art teachers, because there is a difference between being an artist and being an illustrator," McFarlane recalls. "The artist is true to his spirit and his soul and paints what is there, while an illustrator takes the cash and draws whatever someone tells him to.

"So I was the equivalent of wanting to be a whore."

In his quest to earn a paycheque from his art, McFarlane began submitting art samples to comic companies. By the time he landed a job, McFarlane had sent out 700 packages of samples.

"About 370 of the packages were returned, which meant that 330 packages went into the garbage," McFarlane said.

"There's two kinds of people, the ones who say 'this sucks' and throws it in the garbage and the ones who says 'this sucks' and tells you why."

"I believe I got my job because of two things. One, that I was a pest and two, the ones who I hit over the head saw that I was continuing to grow as an artist."

This constructive criticism helped him hone his skills. He would read the criticisms, address the weaknesses in the next batch of artwork and resubmit it.

Over the next 18 months, he whittled the number of artistic weaknesses down, until he landed a job with Marvel Comics.

"I believe I got my job because of two things," McFarlane explains. "One, that I was a pest and two, the ones who I hit over the head saw that I was continuing to grow as an artist."

McFarlane's big break came in 1984 with Marvel/Epic Comics penciling Scorpio Rose, an 11-page back-up story in Coyote.

After joining Marvel Comics, McFarlane eventually worked his way to the top of the company's roster.

In 1990, McFarlane was handed creative control for a new title, Spider Man. The first issue of the book, which McFarlane wrote, drew and inked, sold more than 2.5 million copies and became the best-selling comic book of all time, selling more than 2.5 million copies.

But despite McFarlane's golden touch, he was cut out of the decision-making process

"They'd be having their meetings to decide the direction of Spiderman and you'd think they would talk to the guy drawing the book," McFarlane recalls. "It never dawned on them to talk to the kid who quadrupled their sales."

It was a decision which ultimately cost the company the services of its top artists.

McFarlane decided to quit the company during the summer of 1991.

In early 1992, top comic artists Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, Jim Valentino, Erik Larsen, Marc Silvestri and Whilce Portacio broke off from Marvel and joined McFarlane to form Image.

It was a company born out of frustration with the corporate mentality that was prevalent in the industry at the time — and is still present almost 10 years later.

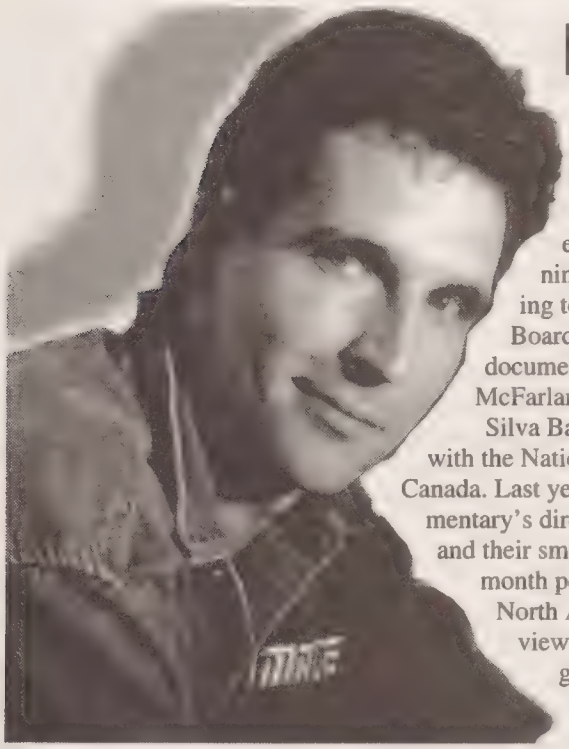
"Short-sightedness and greed," McFarlane describes the industry's shortcomings . "Their decisions are based on making money today and forget about tomorrow."

Still, McFarlane takes a measure of pride in the impact he has had on the way the industry treats its talent.

"They thought that the talent was interchangeable and they learned they were mistaken. They had to better the pay scale because of what we did," he said.

Despite all of his accomplishments and the success of his company, McFarlane is still enamoured with his first love.

"I'd trade it all away today just to play centrefield."



Filmmakers focus on McFarlane

The combination of a young, passionate filmmaker and a dynamic Canadian entrepreneur is a "a winning combination," according to the National Film Board producer in charge of a documentary on Todd McFarlane.

Silva Basmajian is a producer with the National Film Board of Canada. Last year, Basmajian, the documentary's director, Kenton Vaughn, and their small crew spent a five-month period criss-crossing North America collecting interviews which will provide a glimpse into the man who first gained fame as an artist on Spiderman comic books and who has forged a cottage industry with his own creation, Spawn.

"I want to answer the question of what happens to the little guy when he makes it big," said Vaughn, adding he's still not quite sure if he found the answer.

Post-production work will commence in late May. The film is expected to be ready for a fall release date and should make its first appearance in film festivals.

The concept for the documentary was suggested by Vaughn, a freelance filmmaker, about a year ago.

It was the second time Vaughn had made the pitch. While working on the CBC television program Venture, Vaughn had conceived of a segment which would focus on McFarlane's status as a corporate rebel.

Continued on page 67

Recommended Reading

Parsec's roster of comic book experts offers the following suggestions for current and up coming releases:

"If you aren't reading Top 10, then you're missing the best comic book on the shelf,"

— Pat, 8th Street Comics
Saskatoon, Sask.

•••

"I recommend Nightwing, Top 10, Tom Strong, Authority and JLA as good reads. Unfortunately the America's Best comics are highly undersold."

— Bryce, Upstart Comics
Nanimo, B.C.

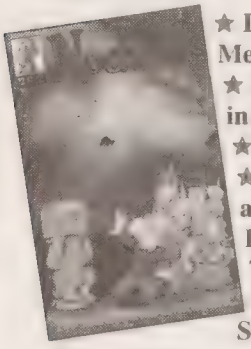
•••

"I like the trend that Image Comics is creating with it's new Fantasy titles — Tellos, Warlands, More Than Mortal. Good solid, interesting fantasy stories and high-quality art. A move away from what they were formerly known for."

— Derek, Strange Adventures
Fredericton, N.B.

•••

Also getting raves are:



- ★ Liberty Meadows
- ★ Strangers in Paradise
- ★ Nodwick
- ★ Knights at the Dinner Table
- ★ Rising Stars
- ★ Magdalina
- ★ Luba Comics
- ★ Box Office Poison
- ★ Danger Girl

Ready for new challenges

Looking for creative freedom, Ron Boyd found it in comics

Created during his university days, this character could well be Ron Boyd's first effort in self-publishing

Over the course of a few years, Toronto-based artist Ron Boyd established himself as one of the top inkers in the field.

Over the course of six years, he inked 72 issues of DC Comic's Legion of Superheroes and put together a somewhat smaller (19 issues) run on Adventures in the DC Universe.

His nine-year artistic career represents quite a change from film industry which was his first love — until he grew to despise it.

"I worked in the film business for a couple of years and I really hated it. It was just an awful place for me," he said recently.

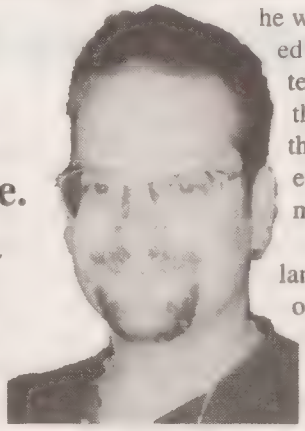
After studying film for four years at York University, Boyd managed to get a job holding a boom microphone for a radio making industry in the Toronto area. He said a piece of work could have handled.

"I went to school for four years for something. I wanted to make movies and special effects and that kind of stuff," Boyd recalled, adding that he worked on industrial projects with titles such as, "Propane: Use and Know-how."

"It wasn't a nurturing kind of environment to create in and I wanted to create."

He had been reading comic books at the time (thanks to Howard Chaykin's the Shadow and Frank Miller's Dark Knight) and had been drawing since he was a child, he decided that visual storytelling was the same thing regardless of the medium, so he entered the print medium.

"It was like a warm embrace. It was a terrific place to be."



Ron Boyd on his stint at Marvel

He managed to land a nine-issue stint on a secondary title for Marvel Comics.

Even if the book wasn't one of the company's flagship titles, it provided learning ness, the comic industry provided the nurturing atmosphere which Boyd had sought. He credits editor Fabian Nicieza with providing the encouragement that had been lacking in his artistic endeavours.

"It was like a warm embrace," Boyd said. "It was a terrific place to be.

"He knew that the book wasn't going to be one of the company's A books, so he let me try some things."

Since his early days in the industry, Boyd said his editors haven't been quite as open-minded as Nicieza, but, then again, none have been control freaks either.

Continued on page 28

Nothing lethargic about artist

INDIE PROFILE

To look at him, you wouldn't know that Lethargic Lad has become one of Canada's top comic book characters.

Creator/writer/artist Greg Hyland has created a cottage industry based on what started as a goofy joke.

What started out as "just a silly doodle by creator/writer/artist Greg Hyland, has reached the pinnacle of comicdom.

OK, that may be overstating the case, but he is pretty popular.

The comic book combines some daring stylistic artwork — daring in this age of computer-enhanced work — with some wry observations by the creator. It's some pretty impertinent stuff.

Hyland started the character while he was in high school with no greater aspirations than to fill up some space in a notebook.

"He was just a character I would draw all the time and then I started doing little comics with him and eventually, he got a name.

"He had the look way before the name."

When the Toronto-based artist was in college he began producing mini-comics as "a kind of a goofy joke" for kicks.

"I'd do about 10 copies, but everyone wanted them and more people were getting involved," Hyland recalls. "Eventually, we did about 60 issues of the mini-comic through my four years in college."

By the time he graduated from the animation program at Sheridan College in Oakville, Ont., Hyland and his creative team were producing about 400 copies of Lethargic Lad.

After spending a year working in animation, Hyland decided it wasn't a career he wanted to pursue, although he didn't mind the paycheques. Creatively, he said, the job was lacking.

For eight years, Hyland juggled producing the adventures of Lethargic Lad with various freelance jobs — including gigs with Disney (where he wrote scripts for the Mighty Ducks series) and Dark Horse.

"Almost all my freelance work has been in print rather than animation," he said.

One high-profile job was producing Justice for Fox TV.

The book was the official guide to the animation series, providing descriptions of The Tick and Arthur, a sidekick who dresses as a moth, and some of the other superheroes and supervillians who live in a place simply called The City. The character was created by

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Coming Releases

Selected spring releases and their suggested retail price in US dollars.

May

Dark Horse

Ghost #20	$2.95
Grendel Tales: Homecoming TPB	$7.95
Usagi Yojimbo #38	$2.95
The Nevermen #1	$2.95
Titan A.E. #1 (of 3)	$2.95

DC

JLA #43	$1.99
Racer X	$2.50
Silver Age: Doom Patrol #1	$2.50
Silver Age: Challengers #1	$2.50
Batman: Gotham Adventures TB	$9.95

Image

Empire #1	$2.50
City of Silence #1	$2.50
Savage Dragon #75	$2.50
Powers #2	$2.95
Dark Minds #4	$2.50

Indies

Geeksville #1	$8.25
The Phantom: Phantom's treasures	$9.50
Portable Dawn	$9.95
Penance#1	$2.95

Marvel

Spider-Girl #22	$2.25
Gambit #18	$2.25
Wolverine/Shi	$2.99

June

Dark Horse

Super Manga Blast! #4	$4.95
Xena: Warrior Princess #10	$2.95
Grendel: Devil's Legacy #4	$2.95
Digimon #1	$2.95
Titan A.E. #2 (of 3)	$2.95

DC

JLA Annual #4	$3.50
Brass	$2.50
MAD #395	$2.99
Lucifer #3	$2.50
Hellblazer #1	$4.95

Image

Section Zero #1	$2.50
Violent Messiahs #1)	$2.95
Fathom # 13	$2.50
Soul Reaver: Legacy of Kain	$2.50

Indies

Bone #38	$4.95
Tick's Massive Summer Spec.	$3.50
Nodwick #3	$2.95
Liberty Meadows #11	$2.95

Marvel

Cable #82	$2.25
X-Men #103	$2.25
Fantastic Four 2000	$3.50

Ben Edlund.

Unlike other comic book creators, Hyland doesn't have "a big story" to tell.

"I barely know where I'm going from issue to issue. People say I'm a little more reactionary in what I do.

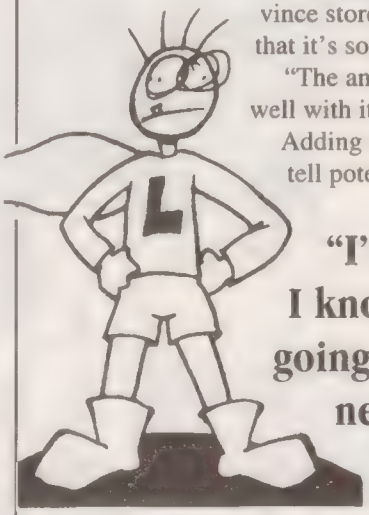
"I'm happy if I know what's going to happen next issue. Usually, I'm in a panic that I won't have anything to write about."

Like other self-publishers, Hyland's greatest task was to distribute his book.

"The biggest challenge is to get the book into stores and to convince stores that this is worth carrying," Hyland says. "And that it's something they can sell.

"The annoying thing is that the stores that carry it do really well with it, but there are stores that just won't try."

Adding to Hyland's frustration is the fact some store owners tell potential readers that Lethargic Lad doesn't exist.



"I'm happy if I know what's going to happen next issue. Usually, I'm in a panic that I won't have anything to write about."

"I get an awful lot of letters from people who say 'My store says your book doesn't exist' or 'My store says they can't get your book' and I know that's a lot of crap. They just can't be bothered doing it.

"Wow, there's customer service for you."

Since Hyland took Lethargic Lad to the mass market, the number of copies of the book has been as high as 7,000 although 1,500 has been the usual press run.

"Now that I'm teaching I can devote more attention to Lethargic Lad rather than work on a freelance assignment and then spend some time on the book," Hyland said.

Now I can focus on making Lethargic Lad the best book possible."

☆

Boyd

After the nine-month project, he landed gigs on the Incredible Hulk and Wonderman before moving on to the steady paycheque of Legion of Superheroes. Now Boyd is hoping to work as a penciller and enjoy more creativity than he had in recent projects.

"I don't know if I want to work as an inker again. I don't know if I have it in me anymore," he said in reference to the artistic confinements inkers must endure.

Indeed, having artistic control is the key part of his projects outside the comic industry. Boyd has designed a calendar for the Toronto Maple Leafs, as well as T-shirts for the WWF and a cover for a children's album.

Like numerous other artists in the comic book industry, Boyd has a personal project which he would one day like to see come to fruition.

Boyd describes the character as "film-noirish." The character is based on a screenplay Boyd wrote while in university.

"I originally planned to do it as a film treatment, but since I no longer have aspirations in that area, I want to give it a comic book treatment.

"I've got an image and I've got an idea of what direction I want to go in," he said.

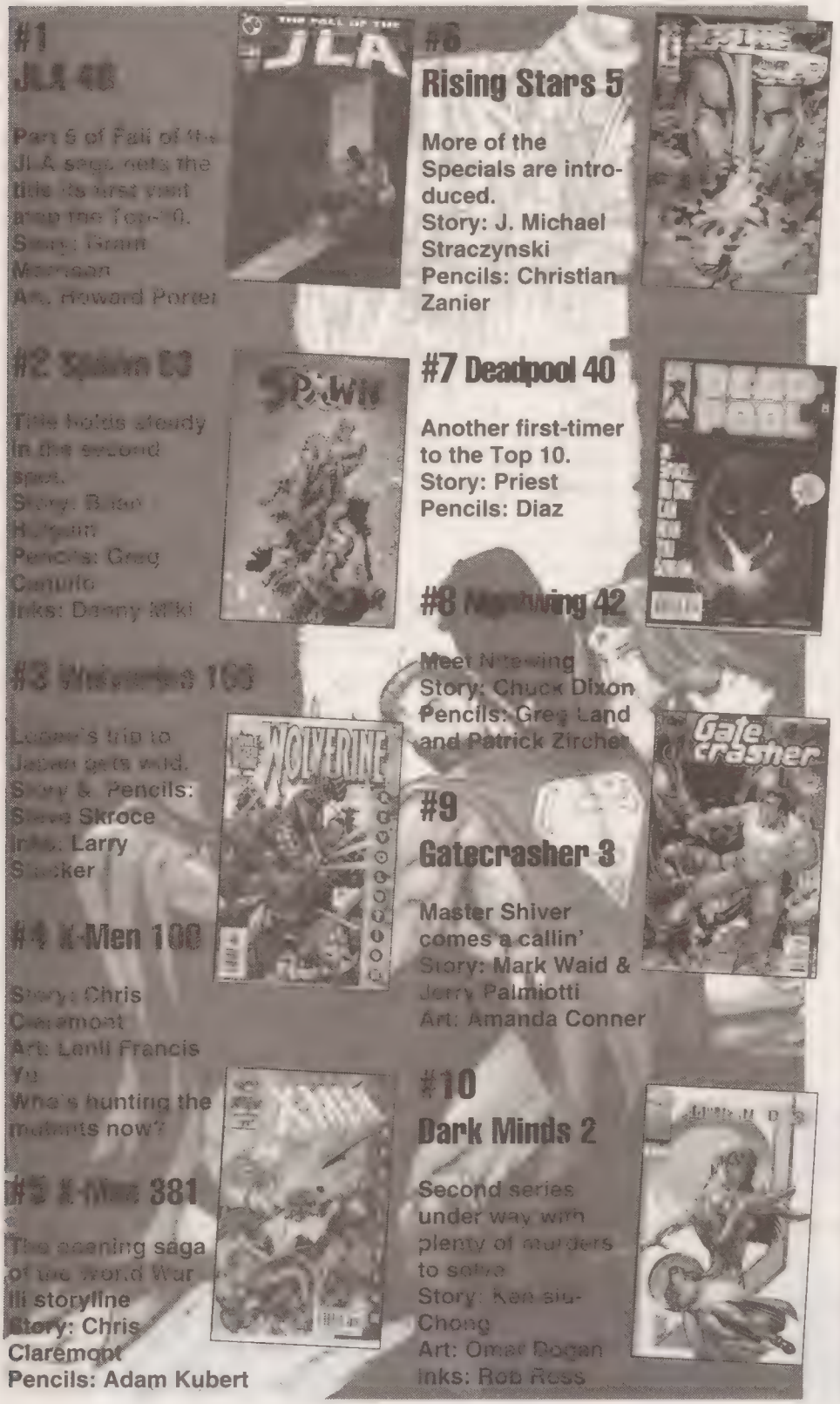
Once he does begin working on the project, Boyd aims to test either the self-publishing waters or work with a company such as Dark Horse which has a reputation of working with artists and writers to bring their characters to print.

"I'm not closing my doors on anyone, it's just a matter of who will open their door."

☆

PARSEC's Top 10 Countdown

These are the top selling books in Canada, according to a national survey of retailers. To find out who's taking part in the survey, please see page 80



#1
JLA 48
Part 5 of Fall of the JLA saga gets the title its first visit atop the Top 10.
Story: Grant Morrison
Art: Howard Porter

#2 Spawn 83
Title holds steady in the second spot.
Story: Brian Holguin
Pencils: Greg Capullo
Inks: Danny Miki

#3 Wolverine 160
Logan's trip to Japan gets wild.
Story & Pencils: Steve Skroce
Inks: Larry Stucker

#4 X-Men 100
Story: Chris Claremont
Art: Lenil Francis Yu
Who's hunting the mutants now?

#5 X-Men 381
The opening saga of the World War III storyline
Story: Chris Claremont
Pencils: Adam Kubert

#6
Rising Stars 5
More of the Specials are introduced.
Story: J. Michael Straczynski
Pencils: Christian Zanier

#7 Deadpool 40
Another first-timer to the Top 10.
Story: Priest
Pencils: Diaz

#8 Nightwing 42
Meet Nightwing
Story: Chuck Dixon
Pencils: Greg Land and Patrick Zircher

#9
Gatecrasher 3
Master Shiver comes a callin'
Story: Mark Waid & Jerry Palmiotti
Art: Amanda Conner

#10
Dark Minds 2
Second series under way with plenty of murders to solve
Story: Ken Siu-Chong
Art: Omar Dogan
Inks: Rob Ross

Comic Briefs

Nevermen return . . .

The greatest heroes who never existed are making the leap from Dark Horse Presents to their very own miniseries, in a four-issue continuation of the hit three-part Nevermen series showcased in DHP #148-150.

"In a nutshell, The Nevermen is The Matrix meets L.A. Confidential," explained writer Phil Amara (Aliens, Burglar Girls, Sky Ape). "They're the only heroes in a 1930s-style city filled to the brim with weird crime bosses, thieves, thugs...and butler chimps! The Nevermen are the thin, ragged line between justice and chaos — resourceful, unwavering, and fearless in the face of evil. They mostly rely on their fists as a convincer, but they're also equipped with a startling array of 'steampunk' gadgets and gizmos."

Gigantor marchs on

Antarctic Press has brought Gigantor back to the North American comics market.

The mighty robot was originally produced in Japan as Tetsujin 28. The adventures of the mighty robot have spanned two generations both in Japan and in North America, with the old black-and-white animated series of the '60s and the more recent colour series of the '80s and '90s.

Ninja High School creator Ben Dunn and World War II: 1946 creator Ted Nomura have brought Gigantor back with a 12-issue series which will run through the year 2000.

Comic Shop Directory

British Columbia

Comic & Book Emporium	1247 Granville St., Vancouver, V6Z 1M5	(250) 682-3019	C	BI	RPG	AR	MI	M	AP	B	Md	HS		
Curious Books and Comics	631 Johnson St., Victoria, V8W 1M7	(250) 384-1656	C	BI	RPG	AS	MI	AP	CC	M	Md	WL		
Up-Start Comics & Games	1483A Bowen Rd., Nanaimo, V9S 1G4	(250) 741-0101	C	BI	RPG	AR	MI	M	AP	B	Md	HS		

Alberta

Comic-Kazi	Northland Village, Calgary, P2L 2J8	(403) 286-0544	C	BI	RPG	AS	Md	M	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B
Saturn Comics	5726 104 St., Edmonton, T6H 2K2	(780) 430-0598	C	BI	RPG	AS	B	M	AP	CC	OL	Cat	WL	**

Saskatchewan

8th Street Books & Comics	1010 8th St. E., Saskatoon, S7H 0R9	(306) 343-6624	C	BI	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	B
Phoenix Comics	2806 Dewdney Ave., Regina, S4T 0X7	(306) 757-9091	C	RPG	BI	AS	CC	M	WL	B

Manitoba

Comic Cave	1104 Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, S7H 0R9	(306) 318-9636	C	BI	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	Cat	OL

Ontario

Big B Comics	1045 James St..	Hamilton, L8K 1B4 (905) 312-6977	C	BI	RPG	Md	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B		
Comics North	106 Elm St.	Sudbury, P3C 1T5 (705) 674-1015	C	BI	RPG	AS	AR	Md	MI	AP	CC	M	HS	WL
Now & Then	90 Queen St. S.	Kitchener, N2G 1V9 (519) 744-5571	C	BI	RPG	AS	AR	Md	MI	AP	CC	M		WL

Quebec

Empire Comics	1221 Crescent St..,Montreal, H3G 2B1	(514) 871-1402	C	BI	RPG	AP	CC	AS	WL	B

Prince Edward Island

The Comic Hunter	173 Queen St. Charlottetown, C1A 4B4	(902) 566-2926	C	BI	RPG	AP	CC	AS	WL	B

New Brunswick

Stange Adventures Comic Books														
	384 Queen St. Fredericton, E3B 1B2	(506) 450-3759	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	AP	CC	AS	WL	B	WL	M	Md
Halley's Comics	25 charlotte St. St. John's, E2L 2H3	(506) 693-4835	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	AP	CC	AS	WL	B	WL	M	Md

Nova Scotia

Mirror Universe Cards, Comics & Games													
	79 Alderney Dr.Dartmouth, B2Y 2N7	(902) 466-8884	C	BI	RPG	MI	HS	M	AP	CC	Md	WL	AS	M
Websligers	Halifax Shopping Ctr., Halifax, B3C 2H8	(902) 455-4949	C	BI	RPG	Md	AP	CC	M	HS	WL	B	AS	HS

** Saturn Comics' website for ordering can be found at www.compusmart.ab.ca

Legend

C = Comics	AS = Anime Sold	MI = Minatures	CC = Collectible Cards
BI = Back Issues	AR = Anime Rented	AP = Apparel	M = Magazines
RPG = Roleplaying Games	MO = Mail Order	Cat = Catalogue Available	Md = Models

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Comic news and more in every issue

Regaining a place for humanity

With the sudden disappearance of man's magical victors, the opportunity to rebuilt the world presents itself in Days of Jared

During the second half of the year, Zero Parameter Productions will put its first game on the market with Days of Jared.

When it does, it will be joining a select number of Canadian companies filling a void created by a massive shakeout of the gaming industry.

The game is based on a story of mythic proportions.

Three hundred years ago, humanity battled a race known simply as They. The beings claimed to be ancient gods and angels.

Despite a battle filled with magic, humanity lost.

But They suddenly disappeared and their place in the world was filled by the Regency — a tyrannical body who cared nothing for humanity. The Regency sought to keep the remnants of humanity in virtual slavery.

But a rebel force with the aid of corporations, and patriots took back part of the world for freedom. Their state became the New Republic. It grew and became a beacon of light for those who hated the subjugation of the Regency. From the single metropolis of Ur, the forces of freedom finally stretched to three cities.

Through it all, there is still the threat that They will return.

Players work to rebuild the cities, as well as explore and battle for control of the world.

The game was created by Kristopher Feric, Christopher Poon and Kenneth Pun.

"It's a game that mixes adventure with science fiction," Pun said. "The players work within the three cities and each one has unique features."

"All that the people are left with is knowledge," added Poon.

The game is designed to accommodate as few as four players and as many as 30. But six or seven players is the optimum number, according to Poon.

The genesis of the game took place while the three were in high school. There they envisioned the story as the basis for a comic book. At that point, the story was set in the present.

But as work progressed, they realized that the story was expanding beyond the scope of a comic book and offered the potential for gaming.

So they decided to set the game in the future and add more characters and elements to the story.

The players work within the three cities and each one has unique features. All that the people are left with is knowledge.

Almost three years ago, they approached Bright Anvil Studios, to see if there was a potential to forge a partnership.

Bright Anvil acts as an agency, an art school, a publishing house and a focal point

Steve Jackson releases GURPS adaptation

Steve Jackson Games plans a June release for In Nomine, a GURPS adaptation of the In Nomine setting.

Written by Elizabeth McCoy and Walter Milliken and edited by Steve Jackson, In Nomine features the epic struggle between Heaven and Hell, between angels and demons.

The focus will be on converting the setting — all of In Nomine's Bands, Choirs, Superiors and realms will be adapted for use with GURPS

In Nomine will be 192 pages. Suggested retail price $23.95 (US).

Harlequin releases Lord of the Rings figures

Among June's numerous releases from Nottingham-based Harlequin Minatures are three versions of the Gondor Citadel Guard I from The Lord of the Rings.

The Gondor Citadel Guard carries a price tage of £ 4.50 — $ 7.20 US.

Harlequin Minatures offerings include minatures for Dr. Who and Lord of the Rings.

Heavy Gear sourcebook released by Dream Pod 9

Dream Pod 9 has announced the release of its Tactical Space Support sourcebook for its Heavy Gear game.

The sourcebook contains additional rules, equipment and background material, including a brief history of Terranovan space flight, information on the Helios system, full tactical space-to-space and space-to-ground rules and sample campaign set-ups.

Tactical Space Support sourcebook has 96 pages and has a suggested retail price of $18.95 US or $20.75 Cdn.

The development crew for The Days of Jared include, clockwise from top left, Chris Poon, Logan Lubera, Kris Feric, Ken Pun. The game is scheduled for release later this year.

Parsec photo

for these professionals. The artists affiliated with the company have worked for Marvel, DC and Image, as well as for such non-comic book companies as Hasbro, Lucas Film Industrial Light and Magic, C.O.R.E. Digital and Warner Brothers Television.

Bright Anvil was formed by Logan Lubera in 1997. The company draws its name from the code name used for a planet killing weapon in a science fiction novel Lubera had once read.

Lubera serves as the company's studio director. During recent times, Bright Anvil has been pursuing projects in multimedia and in other areas. One of those areas is roleplaying games.

Lubera and others at Bright Anvil saw the potential and a deal was struck to produce the game through its subsidiary, Zero Parameter Productions.

> "It's a game that mixes adventure with science fiction."

Since then, Feric, Poon and Pun have been fine tuning the game, rewriting segments and play testing the material.

It's scheduled to hit the market in the fall. ☆

CONNECTED?

YOU CAN FIND OUT MORE ABOUT DAYS OF **Jared and Bright Anvil Studios by going to www.brightanvil.com**

Knowledge is power in CoNTINUUM

By
JUSTIN MOHAREB

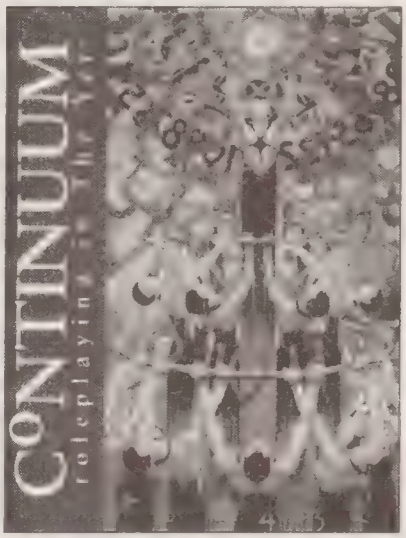
As my swan song, if you will, I would like to just get some karma out of the way and just talk about some of the recent products that caught my eye

CoNTINUUM: Role playing in the Yet is as zany a book as you'll ever find. Apparently, somewhere in the mists of time, Chris Adams played a time traveller in Tunnels and Trolls. He played this character over and over again (and, as an aside, I really hate that). So, after 20 years of gaming in this guy's head, he's invited the rest of us along.

CoNTINUUM is about people who travel through time without the benefit of any sort of machine. That's about as much as I was able to glean. Let me tell you, it's deep. It uses the Gregorian calender to help you track your travels through time, which you have to do. There's a character sheet for it.

CoNTINUUM has an interesting setting. There's all these fraternities of time travellers, and they have time wars and frag each other and... Like I said, it's deep. There's art and quotes from the world of CoNTINUUM that add interesting flavour (and the art is fairly well done, which is nice).

The biggest flaw is the learning curve, which is pretty steep; they even make player knowledge a requirement for character advancement. That's kind of spooky, making the players learn the



Maxims of the CoNTINUUM.

There's a lot of other goodies going on, and it handles time travel well, but I think that the whole paradox element of it just makes for too much brainin' for a new game.

7th Sea is quite a cool game.

It's a pirate game, and I've been playing (okay, trying to play in) pirate settings ever since I got my hands on the old ICE Pirates! book.

Actually, it's a lot more than pirates (not that you'd know looking at the cover, or the TCG for that matter). It's a game set across Theah, an alternate version of renaissance Earth, which has caused some kvetching about the necessity of making it up when you've got the real thing.

CoNTINUUM: "It's deep."

Thankfully, John Wick is slightly more mature than the Senzar crew (or a least more interesting to read).

In case you've been napping, Wick is the guy behind the L5R setting, and 7th Sea. He's now working on Orkworld. I'm hoping his marriage will provide him with enough stability to prevent his implosion (ala Rein*Hagen & Gygax).

Hopefully. Knock wood, fingers crossed.

Theah mixes up many things, putting together Queen Elizabeth into the role of Arthur with the Sun King's court across the sea. Of course, the world is different, what with no Africa (some Middle East to be bad guys; thanks John boy) or most of Asia (but enough of China to have people journey to for spices and silks). And no sign of a new world, which removes most of the location and impetus for real world piracy from the game.

In the end, however, I like the game.

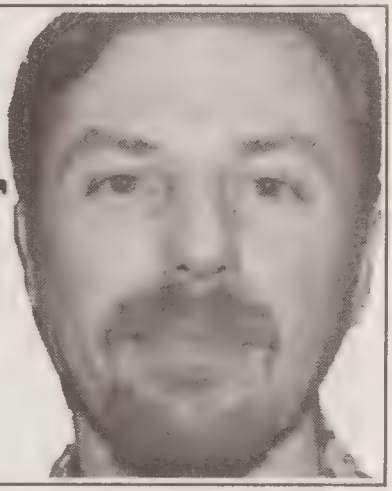
However, I do believe we'll have to execute anyone who mis-spells Boatswain. That's a sign of true stupidity.

Justin Mohareb has left the building. Caballeros will still be gladly accepted.

PARSEC

IS GETTING A TOUCH OF EVIL

Join us next issue when Kevin Davies — the developer of Murphy's World and Bob: Lord of Evil joins us as our resident gaming expert....plus we unveil our new gaming reviewer for our fifth anniversary



Batman returns to simplicity

Artwork and logo TM and © of DC Comics; provided courtesy of Warner Brothers

By
Emru Townsend

Sixty years ago, Bob Kane had a brilliant idea, elegant in its simplicity: the young Bruce Wayne sees his wealthy parents gunned down before his eyes, and so dedicates his life to fighting evil. After training his body to perfection and mastering criminology, he searches for a disguise to strike terror into the hearts of criminals, who are a superstitious and cowardly lot. As he ponders this one night, a bat flies into his open window.

"It's an omen!" he declares. "I shall become . . . a bat!'

And there you have Batman, in his simplest and purest form. Kane had found the meeting point between the brooding melodrama of pulp novels and the barely-nascent world of long-john-wearing superheroes, and the idea still resonates now, 60 years after the Dark Knight's first appearance in National Comics' Detective Comics #27. (National is now DC Comics).

Like most comic-book heroes from before this decade, Batman has seen his share of change.

At first, his opponents tended to meet grisly ends, for which he had no remorse: in his first appearance, his only words for a criminal who has fallen into a vat of acid are, "A fitting ending for his kind!"

Sometimes the grisly end was by his own hands: in another early story, he killed a Frankenstein-monster-like creature by hanging him. For a little while, he even carried a gun.

Also like most comic-book heroes, Batman became kinder and gentler from the '50s to '60s, but by the time the '70s rolled around, he was back in his familiar dark surroundings, paving the way for Frank Miller's groundbreaking Dark Knight mini-series and Tim Burton's unsmiling Batman movie.

The return to Batman's grim roots came at a cost: the Dark Knight became complicated. The original Robin left, the second one died, and the third one came in only when Batman seemed poised to go insane with guilt.

After becoming dark and complex in the '70s, Batman gained a minimalist look in his animated series.

The supervillain Bane came along and broke Batman's spine, forcing him

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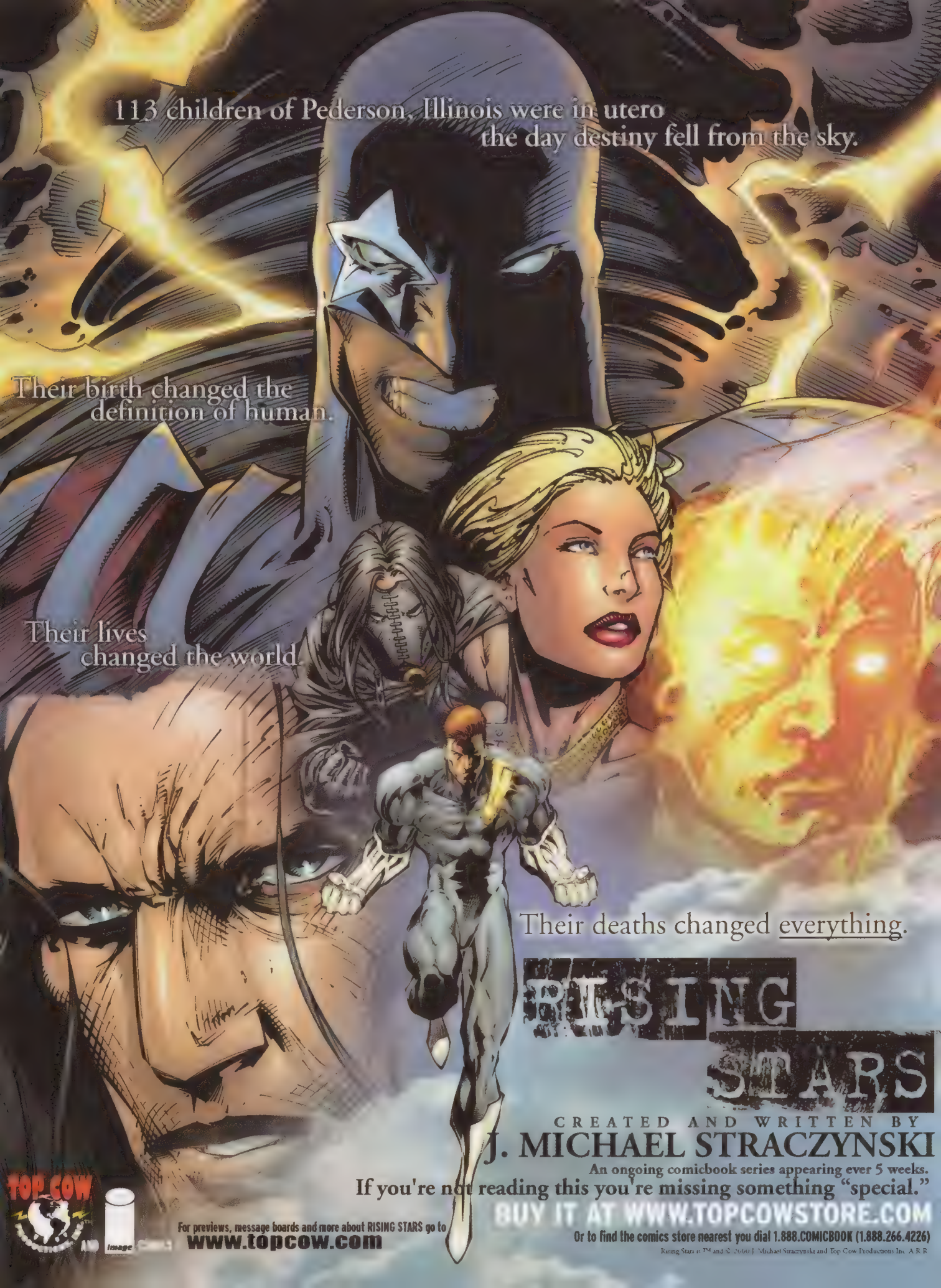
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to enlist two replacements and undergo extensive physical and mental retraining. Of course, one of the replacements was unstable himself. Most recently, Batman's been fighting to restore order to a Gotham city broken by a devastating earthquake, having come right on the heels of other major disasters.

Some days, it seemed as if the young boy seeking justice was forgotten.

The cause wasn't lost. In 1992, Batman returned to simplicity and elegance with the launch of Batman: The Animated Series. Visually, Batman became a clean, minimalist, easy-to-animate creature of the night. The stories, too, became crisper — tailored to fit the half-hour format — while keeping us focused on the fact that Batman, Robin, and most of the villains were born of tragedy, real or perceived.

Of course, the depiction of these tragedies had to be skirted to some degree, as Fox (the original home of the series, before its move to the WB network) had limitations on kids' programming. In general, the writers turned that weakness into a strength, giving some scenes more power because they couldn't explicitly depict, say, the Waynes' murder.

Batman has, since its inception, been enormously popular among comic-book fans, and that's largely because many of the people behind it are comic-book fans themselves.

The net result has been sort of a feedback loop: the intelligent handling of the stories has brought popular and critical acclaim, which has translated into good ratings, which has in turn led to a continuing level of creative freedom generally unheard of in TV animation. That creative freedom has led to a Superman series, a darker, harder-edged Batman for the WB, and Batman Beyond, which premiered to phenomenal ratings in January 1999.

Batman Beyond was something of a surprise to fans, as rumours of a series based on Jack Kirby's New Gods or the Justice League of America had been circulating for some time.

Rather than revisit more of DC's classic characters, the Batman team decided instead to create something new. Well, almost new.

Batman Beyond is set a few decades in the future, in a Gotham City immediately recognizable to fans of Blade Runner, Ghost in the Shell, and any other cyberpunk story you'd care to name. With Bruce Wayne too old to continue wearing the suit, the young Terry McGinnis has donned the cowl; the Batsuit is now a high-tech marvel, with stealth modes, remote control, and flight capability) under his tutelage. Barbara Gordon, formerly Batgirl, is now police commissioner; notwithstanding appearances by Mr. Freeze, Bane, and a street gang called The Jokerz, there's barely any trace of the past.

Batman Beyond's creators have used a near blank slate to flesh out a high-tech near-future society

Batman Beyond's teen focus — Terry is 17,and much of the action takes place near his high school —is without a doubt the product of the current obsession with marketing toward adolescents.

It's in keeping with the history of the previous shows: Batman: The Animated Series was created in response to the increased Bat-hoopla after the first movie, and the direct-to-video Batman & Mr. Freeze: SubZero movie.

True to form, Batman Beyond's creators have used this near-blank slate as a springboard, fleshing out a cohesive, high-tech near-future society and using it as a backdrop not only for new criminals, but new crimes.

SF fans will immediately recognize some of the plots and their elements: downloading personalities into computers, genetic tinkering as a popular fad, addictive virtual reality, corrupt corporations. But the noir elements that have always made up Batman's world are still there, with hits ordered on state witnesses, desperate people doing desperate things, and the usual mix of fear, lust, jealousy, and greed.

It's rare that a series (or in this case, a series of series) can survive for so long and maintain its edge and its popularity. This hasn't been lost on others, either: other animated series like Gargoyles and Invasion: America — also designed to appeal to kids and adults — would never have been made had Batman not paved the way.

Artwork and logo TM and © of DC Comics; provided courtesy of Warner Brothers

In Batman: The Animated Series, Batman became a clean, minimalist, easy-to-animate creature of the night. As well, the stories — tailored to fit the half-hour format — became crisper.

Furthermore, these animated series are influencing the comics that spawned them: the Batman, Superman, and Batman Beyond series have all led to comics based on the shows' look and feel, as well as an Adventures of the DC Universe title, which features a variety of established DC heroes in the same style.

Harley Quinn, the Joker's sidekick/love interest (of sorts) created by Paul Dini for the animated series, has been introduced to the comic-book Batman universe. Also, Batman himself got a redesign for 2000, a new look that is clearly based on the animated series' look.

It's a wonderful testament to a wonderful series, which one hopes will have a life as long and exciting as that of the Dark Knight himself.

Emru Townsend (emru@pobox.com) has been a devoted Batfan for 27 years. You can read the interviews that supported this article at http://purpleplanetmedia.com/eye.

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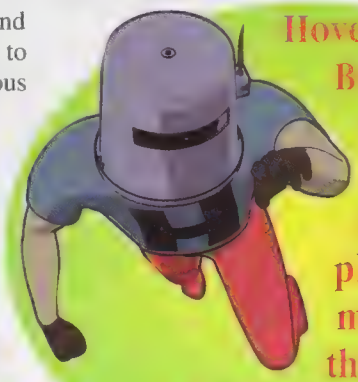
Beware! Hover Boy is here!

The 11-minute Hover Boy cartoon, a homage to Krantz Films by Toronto-based Infinite Monkeys, has been unveiled.

During the '60s, Krantz was the top animation house in Canada. It gained renown in the United States for its Spiderman cartoons. Besides producing Rocket Robin Hood from 1965-1969, Kranz Films also produced the second and third seasons of Spiderman.

The animation of Hover Boy takes its cue from Kranz's style and thanks to judicious use of computer filters, it also has some of the feel of old Max Fleisher cartoons from the '40s.



Hover Boy is called upon to quash the plans of communist sympathizers — including Canada!

"It's really hard to make the animation look bad in a good way," Hover Boy creator Marcus Moore explained during a question-and-answer session.

Artwork courtesy of Marcus Moore, Infinite Monkeys

Soldiers and Hover Boy battle Professor McClure's robot, the RL101, believing it to be destined for the clutches of communist masters. It was a battle which set the robot off on a rampage

Moore took what he had originally created as a comic-book character in high school and began developing into an animated hero about three years ago.

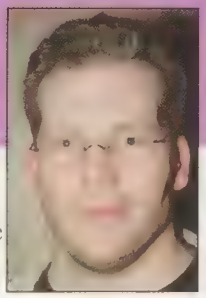
The creative team behind the short cartoon made communist hunting funny and, in the bargain, took a swipe at America's feeling of superiority.

Ace is an investigator with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service — an investigator who relishes sending undesireables back to their native lands.

Rejected for military service, Ace is recruited by the nation's top communist hunter, senator Joe McCarthy

Hover Boy is called upon to quash the dastardly plans of Communist spies and sympathizers — Canada being named as one of the havens for such sympathizers. He must destroy a rampaging robot that has been set loose on the unsuspecting city.

His belt gives Hover Boy his strength and other abilities. Ultra-patriotic, Hover Boy is nonetheless a bumbler — one that doesn't realize he bumbles.



Moore

Now, Moore and Infinite Monkeys areworking on getting Hover Boy on screens at coming festivals such as the Ottawa Animation Festival and the Toronto Digital Festival.

Since, Hover Boy isn't destined to become a Saturday morning staple. But the hope is that it will be shown at film festivals, as well as on specialty cable channels such as Space: the Imagination Station.

Moore is also making plans to bring another of his high-school creations to animated life and, perhaps, mirror another animation style from years gone by

"I just can't explain my fascination with bad animation.," Moore said.

But his next project will be shorter than Hover Boy — if for no other reason than to maintain his sanity.

"To do an 11-minute cartoon was a bit insane to do as my first piece," Moore said.

"The next one will definitely be shorter."

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ANIME RELEASES

Selected scheduled sprin releases:

Shamanic Princess: Tiara's Quest: U.S. Manga Corps; running time 60 minutes; VHS; English — Dubbed $19.99 (US); street date: May. To retrieve the talisman stolen by her beloved, Tiara hunts the night, battling monsters with her shamanic powers. Disguised as an ordinary schoolgirl by day, she arrives at his lair only to find her archrival already on the scene . . . protecting the thief. Why has her love betrayed her?

Chimera: Kitty; running time 45 minutes; VHS English dubbed $29.95 (US). Street Date:June. People call her an angel of death.

A man discovers that sometimes more than faces are covered by

MASKS

Story by
Paul Bates
Art by
Joanne Hansen

DAY ONE . . .

The acrid fragrance of the single dorma blossom roused him from his dreamless sleep. He coughed and sat up in the darkness. He listened for signs that anyone else might have been roused by either the dorma or his coughing. Nothing stirred. The morning was damp and cool, with only the crickets singing their incessant love songs from the cracks between the stones.

The faint light of the gibbous moon outlined the tiny dorma, with its delicate nutshell leaves open wide and its long fleshy tendrils reaching for the dawn that would soon splash broad strokes of silver and red onto the perpetual thin cloud cover of the northern sky.

Instinctively, he ran his fingertips across the soft white fur that covered his face, just as he did every morning. There was something sensual in the feel of the flattened hair around his large almond shaped eyes — hair that was normally concealed by the masks.

He smiled in the darkness at the prank he was about to play. That was, of course, the predilection of the fool. He knew the Priestess had certainly not meant for him to pluck the dorma from its home in the elbow of a feringata bough when she had once again explained to all the villagers the significance of the masks they all wore. No — the allusion to the dorma had been meant only as a metaphor — a bit of tribal poetry to help them understand the mask of Akat — he who rises before the sun and brings the secrets of the night to light.

But regardless of the Priestess's intent, he had heard the allusion for what it was: pure knowledge. The Priestess had said the dorma bloomed each morning before the sunrise, and that the pungent fragrance woke the sleeping Akat. As Pangar, the fool, he had had time on his hands. So he had gone off into the forest when no one was looking and found himself a dorma.

He scrambled to his feet. Had he just heard someone else stirring? He listened intently to the crickets, whose shrill voices seemed to swell in the night.

For the past week, he had been allotted the mask of Pangar every day. As Pangar, he had slept alone in the solitary hut at the south end of the village. He understood that the role had been meant as a warning for him to conform — but it had served him well in ways that Akat had never intended.

He heard the sounds of slow paced footfalls coming from the great hut to the north. Someone there must also have a dorma. Then he understood. That really was how the one who wore the mask of Akat always awoke before the dawn. He smiled again. Akat was not expecting competition. If he hurried, he would soon be Akat, and the one who had grown used to being Akat would be . . .

There was no time to idle. He snatched up his dorma and raced across the raised stone walkway that led to the Crypt of the Masks at the center of the village. The moisture that

bubbled up from the dark brown earth each night to nurture the grain fields was sighing as it seeped back into the ground. His bare feet slapped lightly against the flat stones, but his footfalls echoed like thunder in his ears. He darted past the other huts, the work tents, and the Temple without even looking at them. Finally he darted up the seven steps onto the podium of the Crypt, guided by the fading blue light of the sacred sunstone within.

Behind him he heard someone else running. He did not waste time by looking back. He knew that the one who had been Akat had either seen or heard him and was now trying desperately to overtake him. But it was too late for that now.

He laughed gleefully to himself and stole past the cracking clay beads that obscured the entry to the Crypt of the Masks. The sunstone was flickering as the last of the previous day's light waned within it. But there was just enough light left to choke the laughter in his throat.

More than a hundred masks hanging from the forest of stone pillars stared accusingly at him. Their hollow eyes and their luminescent flanges reminded him of the vengeful faceless dead of legend. He froze at the spectacle until the sound of his rival's footfalls on the steps below jolted him back into action.

More than a hundred masks hanging from the forest of stone pillars stared accusingly at him. Their hollow eyes and their luminescent flanges reminded him of the vengeful faceless dead of legend.

He was not sure how he recognized the mask of Akat among all the others, but he did. He snatched it from the centre pillar and donned it just as his pursuer entered the Crypt behind him.

It was a moment unlike any other he had experienced in his young life. The mask of Akat was nothing like those of Pangar, Domaj and the other insignificant ones he usually wore. It was a mask of great power, and he felt the sudden confidence surging through him as the red tendrils bound themselves together about his head.

He turned and looked up into the gaping face of his pursuer.

"Many pardons, Lord Akat," the other said, stopping short just inside the curtain and bowing his head. "I have come for the role that is your boon to give."

As Akat, he studied the hairy white expressionless face with the large black almond eyes before him. There was no hint of the rivalry they had just shared. Nor did he see the usual derision he had known from nearly everyone as Pangar in those eyes. Instinctively, he reached for the bright green mask to his left with the long blue and yellow tendrils.

"Arise and be Kawa," he heard himself saying. "He who tends the village sheep in the north pastures."

The other bowed again and took the mask. Then Kawa hurried from the Crypt to the Temple to await the Priestess, who would reinforce the role he had just been granted.

The next to appear before him was a woman. She bowed low and he felt himself guided to another mask behind him. It was the mask of Voresta, the Priestess. She took it from him in silence.

He watched the change come over her as the mask wove its long silky tendrils about her head. Her listless black eyes suddenly became pools of wisdom and power. She bowed to him once again and left without saying a word.

The early morning passed slowly, as one by one Akat handed out the other masks to the adult villagers. No one acted as if anything were amiss, nor did any question the one who wore the mask of Akat. And it seemed to him that it was the mask itself and not he who chose which of the villagers would play which roles that day.

When all but one of the masks had been allotted, and no more villagers came to receive their roles from Akat, he strode back through the clacking beads into the morning sun taking the great sunstone from its pedestal within the Temple. The copper hues of the dawn were long gone, and the soft cloud cover that enveloped the valley had become a warm sunflower yellow. He set the pale blue sunstone gently upon its pedestal before the Temple. It would take the daylight into itself to light the coming night for the voiceless masks.

Shepherds and goatherders were tending their flocks away from the fields where the soil tenders were weeding and removing the weaker plants so that only the strongest would survive and bear fruit. Coopers were shaving staves for the oil casks in the open air, while the other artisans practised their crafts within their tents.

He saw Domaj and a dozen other louts straining to turn the great millstone while the aroma of the flatbreads browning within the clay ovens wafted lazily down the branching stone paths and over the rich fields. The world had never looked so right to him before.

For an instant he wondered what Akat did all day long. Then, without another thought, he knew that Balomena, the beauty, awaited him at the great hut. He smiled again.

Gently cradling the dorma in his cupped hands, he strode happily toward his new home. What had begun as a simple prank hatched in the mind of Pangar, the fool, was turning into a most unexpectedly pleasant day for Akat, the wise.

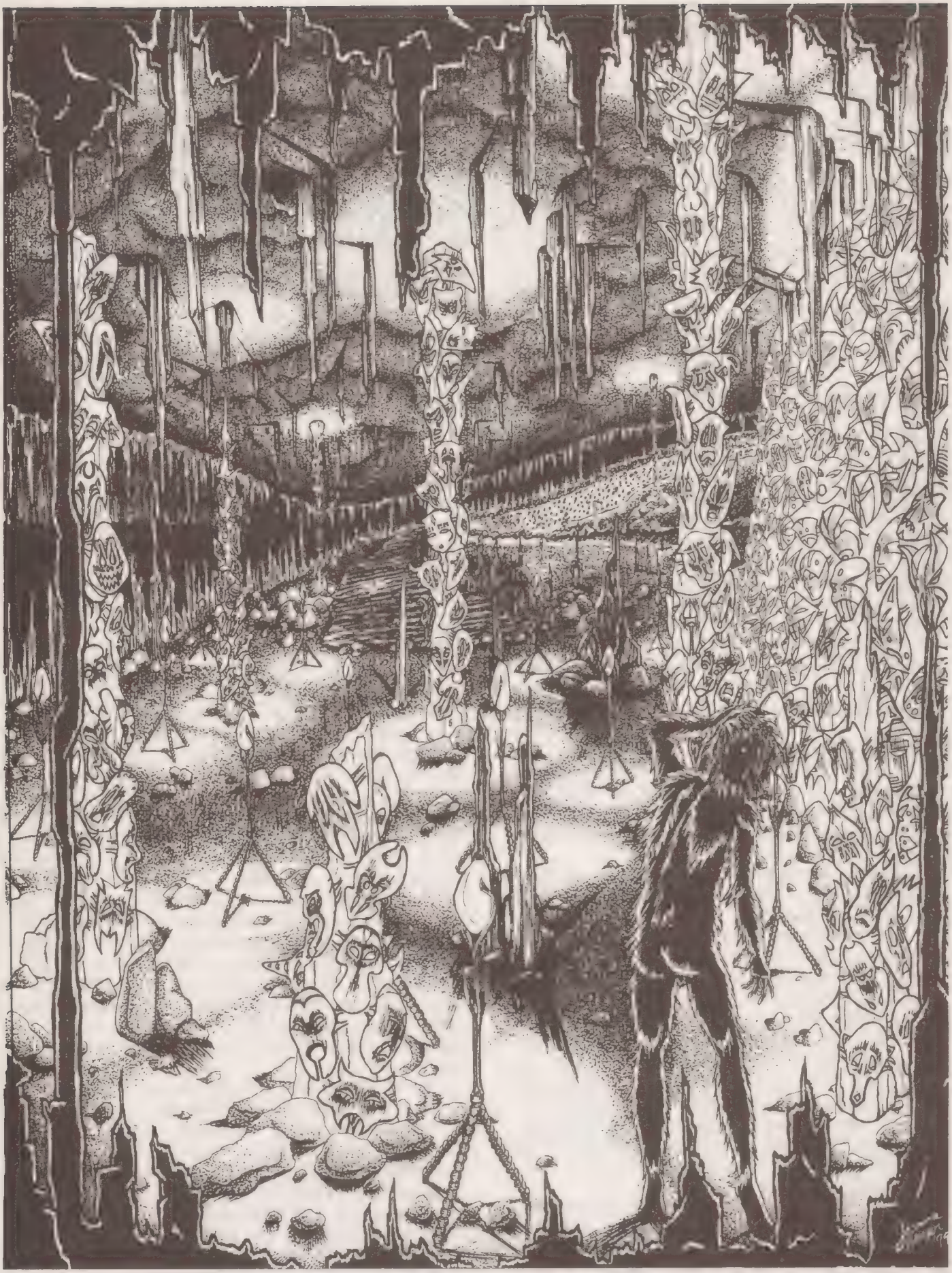
SECOND DAY. . .

He awoke and smacked his lips. He yawned and stretched, scratching his ribs lazily in mid yawn. The day glowed brightly beyond the open windows of the great hut, revealing that Balomena was gone. So was the dorma he had placed beside the luxurious featherbed that was in the abode of Akat.

Instinctively he ran his finger tips over the fur around his eyes. The mask was gone. He did not remember returning it to the Priestess before nightfall. He sat bolt upright. Even the bowls that had contained the feast he had shared with Balomena and her retinue had been removed.

His mind raced. The last thing he remembered was Balomena and her handmaidens grooming and massaging him. It had been so relaxing . . .

He groaned. Akat would be waiting for him at the Crypt. And he would be late again. Who would he be today—Pangar, the fool? Or Domaj, the drudge? Akat did not like to be kept waiting. Something very unpleasant was sure to be his lot.



Then he realized that someone had deliberately removed the dorma. Had Balomena wanted the other Akat? Or was it even the same Balomena as the night before? Had Akat, nee Kawa, convinced one of the servants to remove it? Was it the silent Priestess, sensing something was wrong in the order of things? Or had someone else heard the same knowledge in the Priestess' tale that had moved him as Pangar to act the day before?

His head began to throb. He moaned and struggled to his feet. He had never had to think before and the uncertainty of his speculations were becoming too much for him. As Akat he had definitely eaten too much, and Balomena had been insatiable. He staggered to the door of the great hut.

Outside, Pangar hopped, pointing and jeering at him. The orange and grey mask of the fool looked ridiculous with its exaggerated lines, but not nearly as foolish as he felt to be up and about without a mask of his own in the midmorning light.

He staggered down the three steps and the long north south path and then hastened across the stone square to the Crypt. He could feel nearly every eye in the village upon him as he trudged up the seven steps and through the beaded opening.

"Thy pardon, Akat," he said, bowing low. "The night was overlong for this one, and I ask your forgiveness."

Akat scowled and said nothing. The bright red mask seemed to bristle as Akat handed him a small grey mask with total disdain, nodding for him to leave at once.

He recognized it as the only remaining mask in the crypt from the other morning. He took it and felt the frail tendrils tie themselves limply at the back of his head. He bowed again and hurried to the Temple. He did not recall the name that went with the mask he had been given, but he was sure that it was the first time he had ever worn it. At least, he would not have to be Pangar again so soon after being Akat.

The Temple was a tall red clay conical structure across the square from the Crypt, in the very heart of the village. The main paths all intersected here, and the fragrance of the scented oils that lit the interior lingered on the morning air outside the entry.

He hesitated before the large square orange beads and tiny oval red beads that obscured the interior. A feeling of dread had suddenly come over him.

"Come in," the Priestess called out sternly.

He entered the dimly lit Temple with hesitation. Dark shadows veiled amorphous forms that seemed to stare disapprovingly down at him from an inky depth far greater that the conical roof could contain. The Priestess sat with her legs crossed upon a stone bench with two small flames burning in delicate ceramic lamps on either side of her.

The mask of Voresta, the Priestess, was a brilliant violet, with long delicate blue and black tendrils that danced gracefully above and below it, accentuating her deep black eyes. But the eyes that stared back at him were filled with pity for the drab grey mask he wore.

He bowed his head before her.

You are Demplar, the penitent," she said. "You are the one who is not yet lost, but who remains among the missing. He must find his way back alone. He is beyond the help of the others, and he is almost beyond helping himself. You are he who refused to heed, and must now choose between the dawn of life, and the dark sleep of death. You are beyond reproach, for you have placed yourself beneath contempt. You are beyond counsel, for you have chosen to heed only your own. You linger beyond the boundary of the clan, for you do not embrace the law of the masks and the people."

Voresta stared at him, her eyes filled with a blend of pity and disgust and he squirmed. He did not remember her mentioning the mask of Demplar during the rite two days ago, and he remembered feeling a reluctance to even touch it where it hung upon its pillar in the Crypt the previous morning.

Voresta stared at him, her eyes filled with a blend of pity and disgust and he squirmed. He did not remember her mentioning the mask of Demplar during the rite two days ago, and he remembered feeling a reluctance to even touch it where it hung upon its pillar in the Crypt the previous morning. Then he wondered if this was the same Voresta he had seen without her mask.

"Go," she snapped at him. "Join the riders at the north of the village. Attend the gathering and seek the wisdom you have spurned while you still can."

Her words were harsh and they jarred him. He turned and almost ran from the dark interior of the Temple. In his need to be Akat, he had forgotten about the gathering, and now he would attend it as Demplar. The thought filled him with shame as he emerged into the light of day.

Pangar loped and howled about the door of the Temple. The fool pretended to cry and embraced him like a long lost brother.

There was no power whatsoever in the mask of Demplar. In fact, it reminded him of all the other innocuous masks he had usually worn, save that it was smaller, drabber, and that he could barely feel it on his head.

He pushed Pangar away and walked slowly toward the corral, wondering what Voresta had meant by her dire warnings. He did his best to ignore the antics of the fool who hopped around him blubbering inanities. Would his first gathering be his last? He struggled to remember what she had said about the passing of the faceless ones during the rite. The mask of Demplar felt loose, as if it did not have enough strength to cling to his head. If it fell off, would he become a faceless one?

Most of the carts filled with villagers were pulled by teams of yawka. The shaggy steeds also bore the single riders that lead the procession. These were already stirring up clouds of dust along the narrow road that lead from the village to the main road that wound through the forest then straight down the center of the valley. Akat, Balomena and Voresta would ride in the last cart with Pangar and Demplar trotting behind as fast as they could to keep pace with it. He was happy to learn that their village was less than a morning's ride from the place of gathering that lay over the northern horizon.

The afternoon air was warm and thick by the time they reached the clearing beneath the Cavern of the Sun at the extreme northern end of the valley. Demplar was panting, and his thighs, calves and shoulders ached from jogging without food or water from midmorning until early evening and breathing the fog of dust the entire procession had generated. Pangar was whimpering, and the fool scrambled into the shade afforded by their wagon as soon as the yawka were unhitched.

Demplar's throat was parched as he sought out a stream, well or cistern to slake his painful thirst. The smells of roasting boar meat drifted through the large encampment that filled the clearing before the towering purple hillside. He had never imagined how many of the people there were scattered throughout their valley settlements, and the tent city that was still growing when he found his drink seemed truly endless. The voices of thousands of excited gatherers all speaking and laughing at once was making his head ache. He drank deeply from the common ladle and then sat back heavily upon a wooden bench beside it to rest and look around.

He turned around and saw a large cage behind him filled with mounds of dirty white fur. Someone within it was beckoning to him. Then he realized that it was not a mound of fur he saw . . .

He had barely begun to take it all in when he thought he heard someone calling his name.

"Demplar!" an urgent voice hailed him from somewhere in the bustling crowd.

He stood up reluctantly and looked about. None of the familiar masks from his own village were anywhere about.

"Demplar—over here!"

He turned around and saw a large cage behind him filled with mounds of dirty white fur. Someone within it was beckoning to him. Then he realized that it was not a mound of fur he saw, but the reclining forms of defeated and dejected people lying about in a great shaggy heap without their masks. They were unkempt and unmoving, as if they had all already accepted the inevitability of some terrible fate from which nothing could save them. His heart began pounding, and he took a faltering step in the opposite direction, wishing only to put as much space between himself and the cage as fast as he possibly could.

"No, don't run away," the voice called out to him. "I must speak with you lad, before it is too late."

There was an earnestness in the voice that took hold of him. It was not the voice of anyone from his village, he was sure, but it was one who recognized the mask he wore nevertheless.

The speaker stood up slowly. He clung to the poles that formed the cage as he stood atop the mound on unsteady legs. Demplar could now distinguish him clearly from the others in the cage.

Hesitatingly he drew near.

The poles were saplings, twice the height of a man, shorn of their branches and driven into the ground then bounded together by vines woven between them. It would have to have been erected around those pent up within it. Demplar could now see that the mound constituted perhaps thirty faceless ones all laying atop one another. The cage was open above, and the whole thing looked to him to be flimsy and easily escapable, especially if several of those within put up a concerted effort to do so. Yet, it was apparent to him that none of them would even try to leave.

"Do I know you?" he asked the one who had hailed him.

A wild grin broke through the dirty white face and the large black eyes opened wide and twinkled for a moment before the other contained himself once again. Demplar could see that the face belonged to a strong and stoop-shouldered old man.

"Aye, you know yourself boy," the old man answered him. "Or do you?"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you will find yourself in this cage at the next gathering unless you accept the counsel of the masks."

"What counsel?" he scoffed. "They offer me no counsel."

"They offer it. You choose not to listen. You have been Pangar, have you not?"

Demplar looked at his feet. His white fur was caked with brown dirt from the road, and the rest of him was nearly as soiled from the dust as those within the cage. Last night, five maidens had combed that fur and washed it with rosewater.

"What of it?" he snapped back. "I have been Akat as well."

The old man broke into a fit of laughter.

"You do not believe me?"

"Oh, but I do — I really do," the old man said, choking back his own tears of mirth. "What did you do — go out and find a dorma blossom while the rest of the village toiled?"

"As a matter of fact that is exactly what I did."

The old man stopped laughing.

"I did the same thing when I was your age," he said quietly. "Only the knower of wisdom in my village at that time was called Kotu. From that point on, two of us vied for the mask of Kotu daily, stealing one another's dorma and giving the other the mask of the fool or one of the drudges whenever we could. After a while, we switched to those of the sheep and goatherders, so that we could smell one another coming. But a day or two in the fields between a day or two at playing the knower seemed to be well worth it. Between us, we must have sired half the young of our village."

"What became of him?"

The old man gestured with his chin at the mound of whimpering fur near his feet. He spat on it, and then kicked it. The other cried out and then became silent.

"What happened to both of you?" Demplar demanded.

"Another joined our game, but he played with moderation. The mask preferred him, and soon my rival and I found ourselves faceless."

"Why are you telling me this?"

"Because you can hear what I am saying. You can hear with the ears of the wise, as well as the ears of the fool, Demplar. Beware that the mask of Demplar does not choose you like the mask of Kotu chose its wearer."

The old man broke into another spasm of laughter and sank back into the faceless mound of dirty fur around him.

Demplar stood there trembling, waiting for the old man to rise and speak again, but he did not move save to take an

occasional short and listless breath.

No one else at the gathering seemed to want to know him so he made his way toward the food by following the aroma. At least he would eat well, he thought. But when he reached the outdoor kitchen the cooks gave him only a piece of dried flatbread. And when he tried to snatch a piece of meat, they drove him off, cursing him by name.

Foot weary and tired, he sought out a place to sleep.

"Demplar, have you heard the voice of wisdom yet?"

He turned and looked into the face of the Priestess.

"I . . . I think so," he said.

"Where was it when you heard it?" she asked him.

He pointed toward the cage.

Voresta nodded, evidently satisfied with his answer.

"Then come with me," she said. "It is time to witness the passing of the faceless ones. And then we will return all the masks to the Cavern of the Sun. I will show you where to sleep this night. Tomorrow, the entire village will have new faces, and we will begin the next cycle with renewed hope."

He nodded to her, too tired to even speak.

A troop of maskless children scrambled past him, laughing in their game of chase. For a moment, he wondered why they were so carefree while those within the cage were so utterly defeated. He had no answer to his own question.

Beside the cage, he saw other priestesses with burning torches in their hands. Burly men in black masks followed them bearing casks of oil upon their shoulders. His breathing became shallow, and his legs were suddenly too heavy to even lift.

The sun was sinking low in the south beyond the trees, slowly transforming the hazy grey cloudcover to a bright metallic copper.

Voresta raised her hands and the jabbering crowd became silent at once. Someone within the cage whimpered. The men in the black masks opened the casks and began splashing oil on the faceless ones with heavy wooden ladles.

He wanted to scream for them to stop, but his tongue had turned into a piece of rotten wood stuck to the roof of his mouth.

"We live by the grace of the masks," Voresta cried out.

"We prosper by their guidance," the other priestesses answered.

"We embrace the roles of life that give ours meaning," Voresta affirmed.

"We are one with the eternal way," the others answered.

"We embark upon the path of tomorrow," Voresta proclaimed.

"While these faceless ones remain trapped within their yesterdays," the many voices answered.

Then the other priestesses touched their torches to the cage. The fire took the oil with a roar. The shrieks of the faceless ones and the whine of the saplings as they burned filled the air as the flames shot into the coming night. Greedily, the fire consumed everything within the cage, until the dried black husks of the bars fell back in upon the still smoking bodies.

He shut his eyes and looked away.

The stench of soot and death clung to the lazy trails of smoke that drifted into the crowd as the full moon rose majestically behind the thin twilight clouds, diffusing the night with its cold light.

He felt the mask of Demplar releasing its faint hold upon him and he caught it when it fell. Voresta removed her own and placed it in a passing cart pulled by two men in black masks. Without it, she was just another white face with expressionless black almond shaped eyes.

For a moment, he wished he had remained hungry in the wagon. He quickly wiped his hands clean on a cloth and smelled them.

"Come with me," she said, taking him by the hand.

Trembling, he followed her, casting a last tearful glance at the black smoldering heap where the cage had been.

THIRD DAY . . .

He lay beside the ones who had been Voresta, Balomena and Akat within their cart. He heard the rhythm of their easy breathing and felt the warmth of their bodies for half the night, but sleep would not come to him. The memory of the death of the faceless ones had been too graphic. He had trembled for hours at the thought of it, yet the others did not seem to either notice or care beyond the fact that it had been part of the rituals that made them a people.

Finally, when he could endure their sleeping no longer, he rose and crawled carefully from the wagon. It swayed as he lowered himself to the ground, silencing the crickets below it for a few moments. But no one noticed his leaving — not even the one who had been Pangar when he stepped upon the fool's outstretched hand in the darkness. Soon, even the crickets were singing their monotonous song anew as he wandered about the camp, hoping to find something to eat.

He had been unaware of his hunger until he was out of the wagon. Then the empty gnawing sensation in his stomach became overwhelming. Stealthily he made his way toward the base of the mountain to the place where the makeshift kitchen had been.

He was gratified to find nearly a whole leg of roast boar beneath a huge clay platter cover where he had last seen it. He scrounged around the boxes of utensils until he found a sharp knife, and then he sliced himself a thick slab of pork.

It was delicious. He helped himself to a ladle full of water from the cistern and pondered how he would spend the rest of the night.

The words of the faceless one came back to him unbidden, and he knew that helping himself to the pork was yet another step on the path to becoming a faceless one himself. For a moment, he wished he had remained hungry in the wagon. He quickly wiped his hands clean on a cloth and smelled them. Then another voice within his mind scoffed at him, demanding to know why he wished to behave like the sheep that Kawa tended.

He sat down upon a wooden bench at the outskirts of the kitchen and fearfully pondered his fate.

He sighed and looked up at the mountain. A pair of torches burned a short way up it and he could just make out a narrow foot path that wound its way back and forth up the

mountainside, stopping at the torches. This must be the Cavern of the Sun, he thought. A strange name for a dark place.

He stood up and squinted at the opening. There was a barely discernable radiance about it. No doubt it held a sunstone or two within, he decided.

He looked about to see if anyone else was stirring, but if they were, he did not hear them.

Aimlessly he made for the mountain trail. It was going to be a long night, and no one had told him that entering the Cavern of the Sun was taboo.

It took him nearly half an hour to complete the climb. Twice he stopped when he heard a harsh sound, like the snarl of a large predator, coming from above him. But each time, it had stopped and he continued on unafraid.

When he reached the narrow entrance to the Cavern, he saw two men still wearing their black masks sleeping within the opening. One of the men snored loudly from time to time, and he stifled his laughter at the sight of the predator he had feared just moments before. He wondered why they had not removed their own masks after gathering up all the masks those below had worn.

He hesitated at the cave mouth, looking back on the sprawling tent city below him. A light breeze had loosened one of the tent flaps at the front of the kitchen. It looked to him like a wounded bird flapping its one good wing in a futile attempt to become airborne.

He turned back and entered the Cavern. Row upon row of heavy oil casks lined the wall just beyond the sleeping guards. He began to wonder if these were used for something other than ridding the clans of their faceless ones. Perhaps, the faceless ones were weeded out more than once every cycle.

The cave twisted and turned, and he followed the ever brightening glow that led him inward. He decided that there must be more than just one or two sunstones within, but he was not ready for the harshly brilliant sight he found when he reached the main cavern. He shielded his eyes against the stark blue radiance and gasped.

There were innumerable sunstones mounted upon their tripods, and the walls were formed of the same blue rock, catching and reflecting the light like a shower of cold flame. These were covered with the masks. Hundreds and hundreds of them, clinging to the walls wherever he looked. There were many more masks than the crowd assembled below could ever hope to wear, and the cavern seemed to recede indefinitely back into the mountain.

There were broad faced expressive masks with slanted eyes and pensive masks with dark tendrils and subdued lines. There were huge masks of many colors and smaller ones with familiar two- and three-toned patterns. And what's more, they all seemed to be growing on the blue crystal, much as his dorma blossom had found a home in the elbow of the ancient feringata tree.

He staggered backward at the sight and nearly tripped over a sleeping guard. Several dozen men still wearing the black masks he had not seen before the gathering were sleeping upon reed mats laid down upon the cavern floor.

His mind was aswirl with thoughts he could not express, and he began backing slowly out of the cavern, lest he arouse anyone sleeping within. So this was the secret of the masks, he realized, they are living plants, not just ornaments made by the people. He took a last look back.

Then he noticed something that he had missed in his awe just moments before. There was some sort of order to the way the masks were grouped, much like they had been within their Crypt back in the village. The insignificant ones like Demplar and Domaj were kept at the periphery, while the more significant ones, like Voresta and Akat, were grouped nearer to the centre. Instinctively his eyes moved to the very heart of the arrangement.

There was no question about it. All of them were grouped about a single silver mask with thick gold and crimson tendrils. He could not take his eyes from it.

Then the thought occurred to him that he did not feel the intensity of these masks, as he had felt the ones in the Crypt on the day he had been Akat. Could the masks, like the people, be sleeping?

Feeling bolder, he stepped deeper into the cavern until he stood before the silver mask about which all the others were grouped. He wondered about the name and the

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significance of this mask of masks.

Then suddenly, without even intending to do so, he reached out to it and plucked it from its perch upon the rock. He put it on his face. The tendrils began to writhe slowly as if the mask still slept and he let them entwine behind his head.

He was totally unprepared for what followed. Scene after scene began unfolding before him, until he thought he would go mad from the visions he watched. He saw the masks within their cavern reaching out with their thoughts to the people living in the woods, and the people responding to their call like goats to the goatherder's whistle. He saw the people as little more than curious animals until they donned the masks. He saw them learn to articulate words, form a language, discover how to communicate more than their basic needs to one another as they learned to speak. Wearing their masks, he saw the people learning to build huts of stone and clay, pens of wood, and the raised walkways and platforms above the seeping waters in the lowlands. He saw them learn to develop their crafts though the guidance of the masks. He saw them learning to do more than hunt and gather fruits and nuts in season. Now they kept livestock and tended fields. They baked bread and cooked their meats and vegetables. And all this was due to the influence of the masks.

His eyes filled with tears. Reverently, he removed the silver mask and returned it to its roost, where the tendrils grasped at the crystal outcroppings. He staggered back to the cave opening. Now he had found wisdom as Voresta had bade him. Now he knew the truth. He wiped the tears of joy from his eyes. The people were nothing. The masks were everything. The masks were their volition. The people only gave them mobility. And the people owed everything they had become to the masks. This was the basis of the law of the masks and the people that Voresta had so often cited.

He stood dumbly between the burning torches. A cool breeze ruffled the shaggy white fur on his arms and legs, and he took a deep breath. It would be a long slow climb back down the mountainside. One of the guards behind him began to snore again.

The stench of the dead faceless ones still lingering upon the night winds smote him without warning. And with it came a sudden rage that filled him with its clarion voice.

What had the faceless one said to him? Something about the mask choosing him. Akat had certainly not chosen him — that was painfully clear from his ignoble journey to the gathering. Neither had the nameless silver mask sleeping with the others in their heavily guarded Cavern. What role did he have in their meticulous order? It would be forbidden for him to speak of what he had seen, and no one would even want to hear of it, much less believe him if he dared to share it with another. Even Pangar and Domaj did not wish to claim him in the most menial of capacities within this alliance of the people and the masks.

It did not matter what he did. Sooner or later he knew he would be a faceless one. There was no mask for one who thought his own thoughts — he was certain of that.

The night was still dark. Dawn was hours away. He knew at once without pondering his options what he would have to do. He smiled grimly. All those years of being Domaj and the other drudges had made him very strong. He hefted up the nearest cask of oil as if it were weightless and returned with it to the heart of the cavern.

The sunstones still blazed brightly, illuminating a cistern and a ladle for the guards. He set the cask down beside it. Slowly and carefully, he dumped the water out. He removed the stopper from the cask and poured the oil as quietly as he could into the cistern.

Twice he stopped to listen. Each time he heard only the deep breathing of the guards. He still could not feel the hollow eyes of the masks upon him, so he went back to the entry for another cask of oil.

He was totally unprepared for what followed. Scene after scene began unfolding before him, until he thought he would go mad from the visions he watched.

Taking up a ladle he doused each sleeping mask near him with the scented lamp oil. Then he overturned the cistern, splashing the sleeping guards. One groaned in his sleep and wiped absently at his face with an oily hand.

He flew on tiptoes back to the entry and uncorked all the other casks, letting them flow like a river down into the distant cavern below. The gurgling oil seemed to laugh mischievously with him. He took one of the torches from the entry and touched the bright flame to the river of oil. The fire scrambled into the heart of the mountain to the domain of the masks. Billowing grey smoke drove him back coughing into the open air. Carefully he set the torch back into its stand.

He sighed and began making his way down the winding trail to the wagon at the far side of the tent city below. Once he thought he heard one of the guards cry out above the terrible roaring behind him.

He barely felt the stone path beneath his feet, and when he reached the valley it seemed to him that he was simply floating across the open field. The wind was still playing with the kitchen tent flap when he passed. He stopped to watch it and then he laughed aloud.

He stretched and yawned at the foot of the wagon, watching out lest he again step on the outstretched hand of the one who had been Pangar. He slid himself cautiously between the ones who had been Balomena and Voresta. Their warmth felt welcome and safe. He put his arm gently about the Priestess. She moaned in her sleep and pressed herself closer to him.

Tomorrow they would all just be themselves.

He stared past the Priestess' gently rounded shoulder past the open back of the wagon at the tents beyond and wondered. Would the people be able to survive without their masks? He had not stopped to consider that before. The children seemed to be doing just fine without them. Perhaps the adults could learn from the children. There would be a need for strong leaders, that much was certain. He was strong, he decided, both in body as well as mind.

He smiled at the thought and drifted off to sleep. And for the first time in his life he dreamed.

☆

Beneath Midnight Skies

A Story by
Mark Leon Collins

My name means nothing, or rather little. Although it is mentioned in the annals of our chronicles, my name would not conjure to mind a character of the heroic, nor majestic. Certainly mine is not a name listed amongst the notorious. I am of noble blood, and my clan is royal. We have clans within our tribes; combining our numerous tribes is our race. We are the Glandrath; this is the name we call ourselves and we shun the name given to us by our enemies, and I shudder to list it here: Orcs.

King Urik came into my cavern and sat down at my table. I arose to my feet in respect and he bade me sit. "I want you to fetch my Queen. Gruiriel has run away to the North."

He said this more irately than unhappily.

I laid my quill gently to the side of my vellum book. "There's better fellows to send than me," I replied respectfully.

"But you have taken a vow not to molest the females," he said. "For when you journey you shall be in phase, you will not lust after Gruiriel when you return her from that despicable rebel-rouser, Chieftain Garl. More importantly, you are to go for I do not trust him for the fresh rumours I hear of him. My nerves are frayed for thought of him and his ends which is why Gruiriel has run to him."

And he added thickly through his fearsome mouth, "I suspect," leaving me in no doubt of his certainty.

I swallowed, afraid of Urik's wrath, and not least of my own feeble control over myself. The lust that comes to us overtakes all our power of mind over body and spirit. "I do not believe I can deprive myself of rutting for another year." I lowered my head; I yearned for virtue. It is not acquired easily. Some of our people have attained a level of enlightenment, empowering their spirit to quench all the goatish desires of their body. They make good philosophers; their conscience is free for they are not responsible for the inevitable loss of the female rut's life; for she must die by the birth of her litter tearing at her womb.

He continued, almost as if I had not spoken.

"Never you mind what you can't do without. I cannot deprive myself of her body any longer. You see, I want her very much, and I know you would not dare —"

"How can you ask me to bring you a queen you will ruin by unregal lust?" I was almost forgetting my place in addressing my King this way.

He reached out to me. A heavy frown was set upon his face. He hissed and saliva sprayed past his fangs as he pleaded: "Say she will break the taboo - she must. Say she wants me! I am your King — you must not argue with me, less so that Garl!"

I was much perturbed for he was contesting the very fabric of our society. But before he grew too angry with me, I pleaded quietly, "Dismiss her and find a queen you will honour, please, Your Majesty. Cast her out, and dwell on her no more. If you cannot be trusted to uphold our ancient customs for a queen, you will shatter your throne; what future for queens after Gruiriel?"

He was adamant.

"You will go to her for you are greatly respected. And if she will not come, you must take your life for I could not bear

to believe you could lose me my bride. Then I will forget about her. She is manipulating me: she wants me to cast her out for her rebellion so she can stay with Garl, whom you must fathom for me."

I swallowed. "Your Majesty, what is so special about her?"

"She is hardy . . . and why, everything. Look what she's doing to me! Oh she's crafty — she knows she has a place with that upstart Garl. Why, she would bear me great offspring if — when she comes back. She will always be remembered!" He growled angrily at my hesitance: "Perhaps then I shall dethrone her, rut her — in ritual — and she had best die fruitless for I shall behead her after for all this."

He was losing all reason; I refrained from saying: "You expect too much. If she is dethroned she must surely die! She cannot live a day longer."

Even dethroned, even then, he should not even rut her. Instead, I shook my lowered head sadly. The battle was lost.

"Ough!" He clenched his fist. "Every life depends on me."

I stated the obvious, crying: "You can let live, you can let die, will you not grant the gift of sparing her! Shall I bring her back, and you punish her as an example but allow her to sit with you by your throne as she should? After all, she has fled from you out of fear of you and these circumstances."

"I know. I know." He sighed clenching his fist so hard his claws cut his palm. There was a pause. Then he said, "Leave tomorrow. Your apprentice will assume your duties. We shall at least see how well you've trained him as he'll be working on his own."

"Very well," I whispered with reluctance and looked down at my book. I arose as he made to leave and he did not look back to me. I felt chilled, staring after his huge muscle bound shoulders and the agitated whipping of his leathery tail.

It is my duty to record the accomplishments of our race. My King Urik's predecessor was, by contrast, only ruthless only toward our enemies, he was neither ashamed of having his records cast in duller light than others for he was fair and just. King Urik would not read of his own weaknesses. He considered brute strength a sure sign of virtue. But Urik was otherwise a popular king and we believed his lacking self-discipline was not great enough to lose our tribe, or more importantly, our clan, control over our race in these lands. I wondered how these things should best be written in the light of these matters.

I wondered if I should take my life rather than return Gruiriel. I supposed I ought to; yet if I were to, what then could I do to bring things to right? Yet it is better to die with dignity, for if I were not careful my people would turn to hate me were I to disobey Urik. I would find myself living as a fugitive which is a harder way to live for my people than it is for the surface-dwellers. Thinking no more on the subject, I set my apprentice to the work in hand, things he should be capable of completing. Then I left to whet my sword and generally prepare for the quest.

We live underworld for the sunlight burns our eyes and salts our very skin. So if we wander the topsoil it is under the moon, and although we dream of the stars and of a better world than this, which is spoilt and bloody, we prefer a cloudy night when we occasion a journey. But we hate the night; the visage of gloom and dull pictures is artless: akin to the face of Hel: that goddess of stark black and white — a demon queen the surface-dwellers associate us with. We have always been hunted down by those peoples; we are distrusted, hated, abused and despised. Long centuries have passed over our suffering. Yet we are here and now, and for much time to come.

Our chief shaman, Dorus, blessed the two warriors to travel with me and myself. He is seeking ways to relieve our females of their birthing plight. Upon leaving after dusk, the two warriors carried most of the supplies between them for they were fitter than I. We wound our way up the endless labyrinth finding the air becoming fresher and fresher as we walked, and so it became cooler and cooler until we were outside breathing in the fragrant air of a balmy night. How I wished we could see the colour of the lands spread about us, it had been so long since I stood here. Our vision is good in the dark given a touch of light, the stars alone are enough, although we see only shades of grey and dark and hints of heat in places which radiates red. We see only the brightest of shades by day in any case; there are not many colours in our enclosures below ground. We are naturally not the sort for pretty baubles and decorations of any kind.

It was dizzying finding ourselves in open spaces after the confines of our labyrinth. We rarely ride horses — we rather use wolves when doing battle. But it is true that when we run we outpace our mounts with little exhaustion come the end of any journey.

Soon we were well on our way though I had elected for us to walk. It was dizzying finding ourselves in open spaces after the confines of our labyrinth. We rarely ride horses — we rather use wolves when doing battle. But it is true that when we run we outpace our mounts with little exhaustion come the end of any journey. Besides, animals are difficult to manage and are a burden to feed. However I felt no compulsion to hurry; why should I speed sooner into the grim hands of Death if my mission should prove impossible?

We are a hardy stock and can bear far greater extremities of weather (except the sun) than the surface-dwellers who consider themselves beautiful, but are of a sickly countenance — if you were to ask any of us our opinion. King Urik often yearned for the cold far North but propriety kept us here in the midst of the world. Here where the winds are warm and the rains are not cold; where the sun shines brightly and is rarely shadowed by the clouds. We would dwell deeper within the earth, but below us are other races whose cruelty far exceeds our courage; thus we content ourselves to live closer to the surface, never to discover the heart of the earth's womb.

Within a few days the phase of our lust gripped us. Our loins burnt grievously like the sun upon our backs. We were irritable with each other for want of sexual relief with female ruts, and running did not quench our goatishness. We become very aggressive for the want of physical release if we do nothing to satiate our libido: our lust becomes almost too much

to suffer. Before long we would take our swords against one another for the least of slights, however imagined. Soon enough our very keen ears were drawn by raucous voices far in the distance and we came to a village.

Most of the surface-dwellers' cottages were darkened for their sleep, but our interest lay in a tavern where some people were noisily revelling there. Our swords drawn, we paced over like foxes drawn to wailing vixen; blood was coursing through our veins like molten lava heating the very lust that burnt heavy against our fear.

That the people were in an advanced state of inebriation helped us much, for we were somewhat outnumbered. They were like cooped chickens to us few foxes. Although our warrior Alrick took a wound, the dozen or so men and some women there were readily slain. Their bodies lay bleeding amongst fallen tables and benches. Alrick snatched a bottle of liquor to enjoy as he dragged a chosen woman who had survived us; we had one woman each, we killed the others who were more unattractive to us, and we had liquor too.

I dragged my wench into the back of the tavern. Her scene was pitiful and I was greatly evil. I shudder to remember that we subjected ourselves to a fever of unforgivable disgrace. But for the time then I did not care, and considering the offspring I might sire, my excitement increased and I tore at my breeches.

I dragged my wench into the back of the tavern. Her scene was pitiful and I was greatly evil. I shudder to remember that we subjected ourselves to a fever of unforgivable disgrace. But for the time then I did not care, and considering the offspring I might sire, my excitement increased and I tore at my breeches. As I squatted over her and pulled at her hair, I hissed, "If you kill my child, be sure I'll return and tear you limb from limb!"

Because of our limited generations, we are jealous for all our offspring. At the time, I would not believe my threat could be wasted breath on her, she was so frightened. She screamed much at first, but soon learnt to yield.

As for our mongrel offspring, sometimes they are murdered by the surface-dwellers, sometimes not. If not the surface dwellers leave them, or reject them from the circus to return to us — as then they always do, they soon become twisted and demented for lusts that remain unfulfilled for they never reach a sexual maturity. They writhe with drive but are impotent and rarely make good warriors. Their return is a reminder to us of our very cruel wickedness turning against even our own blood kin.

"Please, please don't hurt me!" was all she was ever able to say.

In guilt my spirit seemed to squirm like a maggot, and my mind cried out, "Lord, forgive me. Lord, forgive me."

I did not dare call on him by name. My body was being completely satiated, but I yearned for rough skin against mine, a female of my own stock who made willing sacrifice for me. My mouth was venomous toward this woman; she bore my guilt and resentment.

We believe in one God who was torn and broken by the surface-dwellers, amongst whom, some say, a few are sorrowful for that blood-letting. Not all of our tribes believe as we try to do, but for all that is between us and the surface-dwellers as two races, all we have in common is our awaiting his eternal patience. His promise of his return is that the undertrodden will be lifted high and exalted above the oppressor, who shall in turn be subject — the lowly made mighty, everywhere, forever; but this tale is not a treatise on our theology.

But we say we are oppressed, and the surface-dwellers say we show them no mercy, although God used them as an eternal example rather than us.

I finished with her and left her mauled so angry was I with her: angry that she was not of my own breed. And although we wanted to stay for more liquor, we fled for we could hear horses galloping towards us. At least our immediate phase of lust was over for the while, and setting fire to the tavern, which was easy enough, we ran off into the night.

After a few hours of running, we distanced ourselves from the pursuing enemy. Even so our warrior Alrick's wound had worsened with our relentless flight; his chest was torn and weeping however much we bound his wound; his injury slowed our pace. Thus gradually the enemy began to close the distance between us as they unceasingly followed our trail over the passing days.

At last, we drew close to the underground labyrinth of Chieftain Garl. We warned his first outpost of the posse following us. Without lingering with them we were soon safely in the labyrinth of King Garl, and he little delayed seeing me.

"What have you brought upon us?" he demanded.

He was as a king and I was a mere ambassador. I chose my words carefully. "I had to come here, and we caught the attention of the surface-dwellers. We kept away from as many labyrinths as possible. But we had to come to you to speak of Queen Gruiriel."

"All the surface-dwellers who chased you are now dead. That is except one. I have chosen to keep him as a slave."

I was pleased for the success. "I hope few of your warriors died. I am sorry." I exaggerated the hang of my head as a token of respect.

"Not one of my warriors died." I could tell he lied, and I felt his army was weaker than he was impressing on me. "I doubt that any more of their soldiers will follow, not unless they want to march to their graves also." He paused, "So you're here to take Queen Gruiriel back to a despotic ruler?"

"Urik's Queen," I nodded and opened an eye wide. "We do not perceive our King to be debased."

"Oh? He'd molest Gruiriel, she tells me. It will not do for a king to ride his queen like a hog. How could he be trusted thereafter? Tell me! The royal tribe will be in ruins." His tail swung dramatically, his hands drawn into fists swept before my face.

"He knows and is apt to have changes of mood toward wisdom," I defended Urik. "That is I am sure he will spare her

Ignoring theology, I continued to speak of the rigid battle training Urik had our warriors practice.

the life of a low breeder. With respect, he is displeased that she never ran to another royal clan, but came here to you instead. You cannot protect her from punishment for what she has done. He will be pleased to hear you have a high regard for our clan."

"Pah, if her choice suggests anything by her coming here, if we are of such lowly caste, your clan is indicative of your whole tribe: A leading lack of respecters for all our race and written customs . . .

"So what does Urik fear? That she should tell one and all of his dishonour? Also she is expected to forfeit her right to deny Urik of his alternative rut to her. I must ensure she has power behind her proper choice."

I could see that Garl was hoping for much prestige in involving himself against Urik in this matter, and if somehow he was planning to contrive Urik's chosen rut to flee here also. I wondered again just how strong his army might be to support any military moves as to uphold a regard for Gruiriel.

"She tells me this: I say again. Gruiriel denied him the least female amongst your number that he would have in his wrath against her. Her reasoning is academic, the rut happens to be Gruiriel's personal friend!"

"Gruiriel is a strong character, she will stand against Urik to protect her friend, she has nerve."

Then it struck me that Urik had desired another mate, one who was to him an acceptable alternative but not to his interceding Queen. Because he could not have the strongest amongst the ruts, he would insult her by taking the weakest. Urik's deprived wants inspired in him ignoble lusts. I perceived as to how Gruiriel chose her friends and attendants, she would choose those who would enable her to wield the most manipulative power, which Urik clearly attempted to counter.

"How can I help him under these clouds?" Garl demanded. "This is like the sun striking me full in the face — I see our world melting before my eyes. Our people must be strong in discipline, upholding respected leaders, if we are to survive this treacherous world, leaders must work towards earning respect!"

"Don't say such things," I beseeched. "Although the problem is truly uncontained, Gruiriel after all, does belong to King Urik and he is King and to be respected!"

"And Gruiriel I now claim as my daughter for I have given her sanctuary." He spoke as if I should say no more.

"Then Urik will pay you a ransom," I said. "Will you accept or do you want a war with your own people?"

"Blood money, or war?" Garl seemed aghast that he should be challenged as if only by my authority. "Surely if your clan stands by Urik, it is not fit for royal blood?"

"Don't choose war?" I spread my hands, ensuring my nails were raised above the palms.

He turned away from me. "Blood . . ." He heaved his magnificent shoulders. "Which ever choice I make will be someone's blood! Yet I know you," and he spoke my name, "Velgon." He sighed. "Whatever is to be I shall have a place and a human female slave for you here since you have vowed not to take a proper female. It would be better for you to work for me here than work ruin in the name of that jackal. That carrier of folly."

"Regardless I shall return. But not to flattery for myself, nor insult towards my king."

"Return?" he repeated slowly. He surely realised that he was offering me a position within an inferior clan to one that I could reasonably expect to find home in. "So you shall leave for Urik?"

He sounded resigned to disappointment. "Ah yes, the ransom. I had dismissed it from mind." His tail twitched.

"I considered you would accept my offer and let Urik lay." He looked above my head. "How come that he is so popular? Yet if I accept no ransom . . . "

"So? My clan respect his stance, he holds us strong against the surface-dwellers. He has proved to them that their demand for tribute is futile. Yet we all have weaknesses; our God tells us that."

Ignoring theology, I continued to speak of the rigid battle training Urik had our warriors practice. In length I added that although we were few in number Urik was wise enough in diplomacy to be able to count with certainty on gaining plenty of support from clans near and far in a time of rebellion. He could elicit support from all in outright war against the surface-dwellers, or anyone else for that matter.

"Under Urik the tribes rarely fight against one another, it is true," Garl shook his head. "Even I have assured him of my alliance in the event of any rebellions. Yet would all rally beneath his banner against our own inscribed customs?"

Garl's face became progressively grim as I informed him of Urik's alliances and ties. Exasperated he said we must discuss a ransom.

"I'll grant you audience with Gruiriel," he said to me. "But she remains here until I get the ransom, Velgon." He emphasised my name as if it were a curse.

"Very well."

Gruiriel told me no more than I had already ascertained from Chieftain Garl. My lusts were beginning to rise once more and she was truly an attractive creature. I felt Urik to have been a fool to have chosen her for his Queen. I wondered if he secretly hoped for virtue as I did, to be able deny himself one as Gruiriel he might symbolically deny anything for himself. Yet perhaps her life would be wasted on offspring - she had a keen mind. Here she stood before me; her pert breasts would be ripe, full for suckling the offspring of the dead. Perhaps, Urik hoped her milk would

bring the little ones great strength. She stood tall and given training might well equal many a warrior. How she would writhe in lust!

"How dare you ask how I choose my friends," she verbally savaged me.

She had spirit. "However I choose my company is my choice and not even Urik's place to interfere!" Her tail was swinging wildly and I could see her muscles contract her fists as if she might beat me unceasingly over the head.

No amount of objection moved him to satisfaction, although he held no complaint toward their quality; and certainly no amount of pleading that Urik would have my head would waver him.

"I have come here to shame Urik, and because Urik does not trust Garl. I have made ever the right choice — as I do whatever my reasonable cause for making friends, and I shall not have choices made for me! I am rightfully a Queen!"

"There are many of us who wish to support you in your position. I can show Urik he stands to lose everything by demeaning you."

I did not suggest due punishment would be an aside. I must return her to Urik, Queen Gruiriel was sorely troubled as it was.

"What is there for me if I return?" she asked plaintively. "Yet I know Urik. I shall think of ways to appease him. But I shall not betray my friend for his lust! He is little more than the hogs we keep. May his food taste of their spill!"

She inspired me with her antipathy towards him; I wondered how long he might have been becoming an old fool. Shortly after our interview, she introduced me to Garl's chief trainer who showed off his warriors with me. As Garl had indicated to me, he also boasted no warrior was lost to the soldiers who followed us, he would launch a sally in retribution of their attack against us. "So you'd best take care when you go," he said, "for the blood running in the veins of those we capture will be boiled as they live. You will not be safe in these coming days whilst they reel in circles crying for vengeance, so if you are caught . . ."

I could imagine he might well betray our return journey. Falling into enemy hands would suit Garl very much if it should mean he could hold on to Gruiriel. What a symbol he held in supporting her cause! Much loyalty to Urik would melt away if Garl had a care.

To my chagrin, I had little choice but make agreement to return here with a good ransom for our Queen, and I wondered if I should then remain to serve Garl here rather than continue my office with Urik. It would be awkward to contrive, but at least my desire might impress upon Urik his error of judgement. I dismissed any such decision for the moment, perhaps I would never have the chance.

The three of us left with some females of our stock and earth-dwellers' women Garl provided us with 'for the sake of goodwill'. Our females carried the women. As the first snows began to fall high upon the rugged mountains, we were on our way. Our home would be cool upon our return, cold even, since afraid of passing along the borders of the surface-dwellers and Garl we struck northwards before directing our journey home. Alrick was now healed; we were able to run all the way and I could not enforce that we do otherwise. I was beginning to hate Urik, and I loathed the thought of meeting him once more. The more Gruiriel had spoken of him over the few weeks we remained awaiting Alrick's healing, the more she poisoned what respect I had for him. By now I felt any time to meet with Urik would be too soon. Had I excuse to stay longer with Garl, as I had wanted, we may well have been had to shelter with him over winter, and never have returned to Urik.

The thought of twisted fate put me in a terrible mood. I wished to turn back time, I ought to have had words with Garl's shaman that he should delay Alrick's healing. Thus, I decided that I would take my leave from Urik even for a lesser position with Garl. If a position with him did prove to be insufficient for my needs, I might be able to move on depending upon current politics.

Before we finally took the path to Urik, we called on King Balor who was very interested in Gruiriel's flight and asked what ransom Garl was demanding.

"Five hundred swords," I replied.

He looked grim. "Very well. Of course, were Urik dead, Gruiriel would be quite right to choose his successor would she not. Her king." He seemed to find the concept amusing although I could not understand the humour.

"What if I pay the ransom?" he continued. "You may bring Gruiriel to me, then, and I shall mediate with Urik myself."

I considered that option seriously, for then I need not confront Urik immediately and face certain wrath. Balor must have interpreted my pause to be doubtful toward the proposition, for he said: "It would strengthen the substance of our whole Royal tribe insofar as we fulfil our regal role in unity. Indeed, you need not tell Urik any of it. I shall say she turned to me."

"Very well," I agreed, unnerved by his attitude, for she is a real king's pawn, and yet I was barely daring to hope...

We waited at Balor's for a few days whilst he had prepared the shipment, which I duly returned with to Garl, loaded upon ass and cart.

"It is not enough," said Garl. "I want the armourer who supervised these."

No amount of objection moved him to satisfaction, although he held no complaint toward their quality; and certainly no amount of pleading that Urik would have my head would waver him. He demanded that he had since razed two surface-dweller villages, and he needed to be sure he was properly equipped for future wars which, he insisted, I had partially begun. It was my fault that after fifty years of tenuous peace, treaties broken in only petty skirmishes; we were again at war. His claims gross exaggerations; our reckless escapade at the tavern might well have been one of these skirmishes. I had no choice left but to return to Garl in a bigger mess than ever, and now I was to be without the formerly wounded Alrick who would remain behind as a source of guarantee.

My greatest concern was the thought that did occur to me,

Garl suspected I had never returned home; perhaps he'd even had us followed.

Upon approaching our labyrinth, we knew things were not right. We do occasionally farm; here we had sowed our fields to reap as best we can at night. Our farm had been blazed and destroyed by the surface-dwellers. Our outpost was completely empty and no one was taking duty. As we stood bewildered by all we saw, a couple of our warriors came out of hiding and ran across to us.

Calling me by name, one poured out words of woe.

"So quick and terrible! Hundreds of soldiers surrounded us — their wizards fired our outposts and before we could muster, they were down into our labyrinths slaying us in our sleep. They caught some of us, but in the chaos, some of us were able to escape quick. Others got killed running and the rest that weren't so lucky were tortured. They hanged on trees, but we buried them now."

There were tears to his eyes, and his words were choked, as if they were scales in his throat as he recalled the horror of it all. "They might be back to get us. We thought you might be them when we heard you coming, but now its good that it's you. King Urik died over a dozen of ones he slew," he finished.

"If we leave now we can get back to Garl before the next phase," I said thinking of myself and of the female surface-dwellers we had with us. Looking at those slaves, I wondered how much they knew of our circumstances. I looked closely at one woman — Oh! how she is of a proud and clever race. My stomach turned against her looks. Her own kind would find her attractive. These women were good only for milking.

If we left now we could be back at Garl's before the deep Winter's snows cut him off from us completely, so were the words my companions were hassling me with.

"Your chronicles are safe," a survivor advised me. "Although your apprentice is dead. Shall we bring the books with us now?"

"Perhaps we can get the books next year." I thanked him. "They would slow us too dearly. Bad enough with them." I nodded my head towards the women. "Does our armourer live?"

"No."

"Ark!"

We turned toward some trees where the sound came from. The shaman Dorus appeared from the copse. Shrunken surface-dweller skulls laced a necklace of skin winding about his neck and the decorations of his hauberk were studded with their rib-bones. Rings and amulets hung from his pierced ears, nose, fangs and horns. He came up to me and looked elated. "I discovered herbs to help heal the womb!"

My heart leaped. "At last!" I slapped his shoulder. "We must return to Garl at once!"

"I have some potions," he said.

"You're sure they work?"

"Worked on one," he chortled. He beckoned over a female.

I looked over at her as she approached us from her group who were holding sucklings whilst they watched over the tethered women. In her arms was a suckling she showed me with pleasure. "Mine," she said.

Her brief word seemed portentous — it brought a whole new meaning to the concept of belonging and the possession of an individual creature.

"No longer need ours be kept fearful," I said much to myself. "No longer need they live in fear."

"But!" cried Dorus. "We must cut the litter from the womb!" He revealed her beautifully scarred belly by lifting her leather tunic.

"There is no other way?" I asked feeling discomforting sympathy pains.

"Well now . . ." Dorus looked triumphantly above my head. He did not need say he had some ideas in mind.

The fragrance of pine hung in the air, fresh and comforting almost like a cloak shrouding me. We walked the last leg and we had arrived once more at Garl's, but I felt suddenly appalled. For the first time since leaving our ruined home, I now could think clearly, our phase was over.

We left for Garl upon that day's dusk and we now ran at least most of the distance. I found the pace easily manageable, the more so for the feeling of elation that my life was not forfeit. My soul! I was so optimistic for a new position in the future — even still as our tribe's chronicler. We would find a new king. I would train a new apprentice. Memories stabbed at my hopes, and I thought wistfully at how I would miss my apprentice. A whole era, the life of a dynasty had disappeared behind my back.

As we approached Garl's labyrinth, the snows fell quick and heavy. The fragrance of pine hung in the air, fresh and comforting almost like a cloak shrouding me. We walked the last leg and we had arrived once more at Garl's, but I felt suddenly appalled. For the first time since leaving our ruined home, I now could think clearly, our phase was over. Instead of coming here, we should alternatively have travelled to King Balor, for he is now properly in line to the throne. But if Gruiriel chooses Garl for King . . . I shuddered at the thought of the consequences, and this tied with the unacceptable clandestine payment from Balor not accepted . . .? Surely the massacre at home had been executed with such finesse and efficiency the surface-dwellers must have been given much information to enable it. I considered the prisoner whom Garl had taken, and claimed to have enslaved, and I wondered what Garl had really done with him.

I was told by one fellow of ours that a slave had indeed escaped the very same night a scribe of Garl's had spoken at length with him. My suspicion that Urik was betrayed was now furnished truly. Garl had surely schemed to take position as King over our tribe with Gruiriel. His task would be easy now since we of Urik are a mere remnant. I had forgotten what attitude Balor had shown.

Now if Garl were to win both Dorus as chief shaman, and my support as chief chronicler, and with Dorus's herbal discovery, Garl's ambitions would easily be realised. Balor

had most certainly perceived the treacherous designs, and had surely wanted me to return to him with Gruiriel as rightly his.

I lost no time in cautioning my friends to say nothing of Dorus' discovery to Garl's people, but that Garl's defeat lay in the loss of many swords.

I needed chance to think and discover the consequences following the betrayal of Urik.

nd so I have written this chronicle all this day and bear much blame for the demise of our royal clan. Gruiriel too must burden some guilt, she who having given grounds for Garl to conspire will surely continue to lead him to the throne of my former liege. And I wonder if I shall scribe of the inevitable increase of power for subsequent Queens to Gruiriel. Yet Garl has withdrawn his offer for me, and Gruiriel refuses me audience. Garl's reasoning was not plain to my ears, only a fool would not suspect; neither trust me to sympathise with their designs.

Garl is preparing for an extended war with, he says, the surface-dwellers. Rather I suspect he will war against our own people if need be to secure his position.

Having read these words, Dorus shall carry this chronicle to King Balor with a written formula of the healing medicine this very night, and so too of the best way of cutting the womb. And with this, a request that I might join King Balor's clan. Should he refuse, at midnight upon that very day I shall expire. I shall forfeit my life before I can forget that I was party to Urik's folly which ended the reign of my royal clan; I feel for myself being in a worse position than an unwanted herald.

Now I end this writing feeling quite queasy. Dinner does not seem to have agreed with me. In hopes to learn the truths of virtue by Springtime, if I am not vomiting and so am able to, I shall sleep on these things now.

☆

Next issue:
Szpindel & Roddenberry

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Lightning shakes the world with

Long Thunder

Story by
Dan Knight
Art by
Sandy Carruthers

We crested the rise and through the front window of the bus we had our first glimpse of the Esmerelde as it rode at anchor on the bay. The sky that day was a deep, rich blue and the air had a certain crystalline quality that reminded me of boyhood summers on Lake Huron with my family. It was the second week of July, my thirtieth birthday in fact, and the temperature had been hovering graciously in the low seventies for almost ten days.

I can remember that we had all of the windows open as far as they would go. At the time we said that it was to enjoy the fresh air. And truly after months of confinement in the underground bunkers at Hidey Hole, the air was sweet. But I think now that there was something more than that. That we each desired to glimpse America for a final time without the distance and isolation that even a simple sheet of tinted glass can create.

Most of my colleagues on the bus had been born and raised in the sprawling cities of the eastern seaboard and for them it was as great a relief to be once again surrounded by the familiar concrete and steel towers as it was to breathe fresh air and feel the sun on their faces. I noted that there had been much laughing and talking when we crossed over that almost invisible line that separates country from town. As we rumbled through the gutted heart of the dead metropolis though the holiday frivolity disappeared. When people spoke it was in whispers, gesturing mildly towards this or that curiosity. All eyes were turned outwards then. Straining. Expectant.

The goodbyes of my life seem always to be intense things full of vivid recollections; the smell of a parting lover's hair, the translucence of the skin on a dying friend's hand. Yet so often we cannot recall with any certainty the events that led to these people being in our lives. The genesis of so many of our relationships becomes dreamlike in retrospect. But not so with final partings. Those moments hold the full flower of everything that has ever been between two people. They are a culmination, a climax and a judgement. And on that July day, as our bus made its way through deserted streets towards the ocean, we all understood that we were leaving not only the a city and country but an entire world. When we boarded the Esmerelde the last witnesses of an experiment the likes of which Earth had never seen before and might never see again would be gone and a great saga in the telling of human history would have ended. And so we turned our eyes outwards and drank as deeply as we could, each of us alone and yet not at all lonely. There would be plenty of time for ghosts later.

We passed beneath the towers swiftly. The traffic signals at every intersection dangled lifelessly above us. I have always considered traffic lights as the greatest symbol of democracy; tirelessly arbitrating between rich and poor, weak and strong, blind to vested interest and social status. Now, their job done, many had been transformed into makeshift gallows, though by the military authorities who supervised the evacuation or by the mobs we had no way of knowing. The bodies that hung from them were in such an advanced state of decay that their lower extremities had dropped to the street below. We drove by without slowing, our wheels sending a handful of spent rifle cartridges to rattle brightly against the curb as we did.

Further along, where broken signs attested that a bookstore

EVACUATION PROCEDURES HAVE
BEGUN IN MAJOR CITY CENTERS...

had once stood between a West Indian grocers and a hair salon, a human skull, heart catchingly small hung by wire from the gleaming front grille of an abandoned four-by-four truck.

I saw all of this and more in the space of a few simple heartbeats. Each one a flash that burned into my memory before, overwhelmed, it was buried in the immediacy of some other equally grotesque or unbelievable scene at the next turn. I am not immune, as some seem to be, to the sight of such things. They crowded themselves inside me. I could feel the pressure of them accumulating, growing like some dark animal, and slowly devouring the interior walls I had erected to protect myself.

Until that hour I had thought of the riots as having been something distant and foreign, like the Dog Year Massacres in Hong Kong. Now I found myself wondering what sort of person would wire a child's head to the front grille of their truck. I felt sick at heart and needed very much to talk to someone, to reassure myself that human decency and compassion hadn't fled the Earth in the twenty-six months I'd spent buried beneath it. I turned to speak to the Colonel who was seated behind me and it was at that moment that the driver locked up the bus's brakes with such violence that I was sent tumbling into the back of the seat in front of mine and from there down to the floor.

I could feel the rear of the vehicle swing out to one side. There was a powerful crash. Suitcases exploded open and the floor all around me was showered with old photographs and small family heirlooms. Someone, one of the toxicologists I think, screamed loudly. The entire experience could have only lasted moments, but those moments felt like hours, as though time itself had suddenly taken on a new and surprising depth. With a final hiss of protest our bus scudded to a stop. There was a pause as everyone caught their breath and then the few people still in their seats began to curse.

The Colonel, I could see from where I lay, had also been thrown to the floor. Her eyes were closed and she was bleeding lightly from a gash on her forehead. With my right hand I reached under the seat and felt behind her ear for a pulse. Finding one, I said a silent prayer and then cautiously raised myself up to where I could see what was happening.

We were a half mile from the bay. The Esmerelde was so close now that I could make out the white uniforms of her crew as they moved about on deck. My companions had fallen silent. Then I saw why and a thrill of recognition passed through me. Heavily armed and mounted on motorcycles three Indian warriors were waiting for us just ahead. Beyond them, stretching from one side of the street to the other, a number of cars had been moved to create a roadblock. As added encouragement to stop, one of the warriors had a wire-guided missile-launcher on his shoulder. It was pointed at a spot just below our driver's head.

There had been many rumours in the last months.

Though none of us who worked at Hidey Hole were allowed to ever leave the complex the regular military personnel were always in contact with the patrols supervising the evacuation. It had been from them that we had heard the tales of entire groups disappearing while in transit to the departure stations, of hijackings in broad daylight and of the torture and mass killings of women and children. All of it done, we were told, in reprisal for the Indian massacres that had taken place when news of the Long Thunder had first been announced (by which time I had already been underground at the Hole and working feverishly on an antidote for the virus for more than six months.)

On the day the Montreal Mohawks were dragged from their homes and executed by masked vigilantes on live television most of the continent's aboriginal peoples had wisely chosen to go to ground. Some evacuated into the wilds of northern Canada. Others into the great deserts of the south-west. And then there were those who chose a different kind of wilderness, vanishing into the crumbling tenements and sewers of the large cities, living on rats and stolen food, while they waited for the riots and the evacuation to decrease the numbers of their enemies.

We were a half mile from the bay. The Esmerelde was so close now that I could make out the white uniforms of her crew as they moved about on deck.

Many people who had the minimum protection of one-quarter aboriginal blood never ran at all, relying on their colouration to spare them. One of the women in my own lab, a Canadian girl who was part Chippewa, had pale blue eyes and hair just as fine and blond as any storybook Scandinavian. I don't know how well the deception worked for them. There had been a sinister rumour near the end, when things were getting increasingly chaotic and hard to verify, that someone in the Indian bureau had sold the names of the "almost" whites. There was an even darker rumour that, acting under orders from senior officials who believed that complete transfusions with abo blood would give them immunity from the Thunder, they had all been rounded up and milked, vampire-like. I know that Margo, the girl in my lab, was transferred under strict guard without any explanation at all and, in light of the things I have learned in the last six months, I'm willing to believe the worst. As I stared that moment from the bus's front window I thought of the baby skull again and wondered what colour her eyes and skin had been.

Seeing that we had come to a halt one of the three warriors dismounted and approached the bus. Our driver, a sergeant named Vincent who'd been with us at Hidey Hole for the last year, cautiously unsnapped the cover on his side-arm. The approaching man motioned with the barrel of his rifle for him to open the door and after a moments hesitation Vincent complied, pushing the release lever. With a faint hiss of air the door slid open.

"We've come for Barrett," the warrior said, his voice surprisingly soft but clear. He made no move to enter the vehicle, but stood back four paces from the open door. Carefully Vincent took up the clipboard from its place next to his seat and appeared to study it.

"Sorry, no Barretts," he said in a dead monotone.

The two men's gazes locked and the ghost of a smile passed over the Indian's features.

"That's a shame, whitey," he nodded to his waiting companions, "because otherwise we don't have a reason to waste any more of our time on you." The barrel of the rifle he carried moved up almost imperceptibly, but his voice remained

even. "Know what I mean?"

The muscles on the back of the sergeant's hand twitched.

"What do you want?" I said, pulling myself upright and moving toward the front of the bus.

"You Barrett?" asked the warrior, who seemed to me at the time to be disappointed at how things were turning out.

"I'm Benjamin Barrett." I said.

"There's somebody important would like to speak with you, Mr. Barrett."

"Don't go, sir," Vincent said, his eyes never leaving the Indian. "You're the head of the project. These men aren't to be trusted."

His hand, I saw, had moved closer to his sidearm. The warrior waiting outside didn't appear to notice.

"I'll be fine, Vincent. If they had wanted me dead, I'm sure they would have stopped the bus in a much more interesting manner. Whatever it's about shouldn't take long." I looked to the warrior for confirmation of this and he nodded. "Just don't leave without me, okay?" I tried to smile.

"I'm afraid you don't understand, Ben."

"I understand perfectly, sergeant. Either I go with these men or they kill us all."

"I can't allow this to happen, sir."

It was in his eyes.

"Look out," I yelled in warning. Vincent's pistol came smoothly out of its holster. There was a deafening blast and a large piece of his head disintegrated in a spray of blood and splintered bone. My mind went as clear and empty as the cloudless sky above me.

"You saw?" I heard the warrior's gentle voice close to my ear. I nodded.

"Come on," he said.

Ignoring the gasps and shouts of my co-workers I climbed up behind him on the big bike. When I thought to look back the bus was a spot of insignificant colour dwindling in the distance. My body began to shake uncontrollably. My driver slowed but didn't stop until the spell had passed.

I had seen it in the last instant before the bullet had smashed Vincent's skull. It hadn't been the warrior he had been about to kill at all.

It had been me.

Conversation was impossible over the engine noise and the sound of the wind in my ears. As it was I had nothing to say anyway. We moved quickly, motorcycles being the most practical form of transport in a city jammed with cars and rubble. I noticed that every tenth or fifteenth street we passed had been kept clear of obstructions. Occasionally we would travel along one for a short time but always veered off into the cluttered side streets again. I wondered at my companions odd tactics and, as if reading my thoughts, he turned his head and barked out the word "snipers."

I nodded.

So it was true, I thought. Some people really had opted to take their chances and stay behind. We swung westwards, away from the bay, toward what had been an affluent residential section of the city. I looked up at the towers of steel and glass and wondered how many eyes were watching us even now as we passed. At the time, I believed that they would probably be safe and reasonably comfortable for about a year if they were careful; if they ate only tinned food and drank from uncontaminated sources. I reasoned that there was an enormous supply of food in an abandoned city. Since then, I've learned that wasn't the case at all.

Though the evacuation had been firmly controlled to keep panic at a minimum, the movement of three hundred million people and the provisioning of the ships that were to carry them back to their ancestral homelands (coerced into this display of hospitality by an open threat of nuclear intervention) had put an enormous strain on the available stores of food.

There was a small deer-skin pouch that I wore on a light chain around my neck. It had been a gift from someone I loved a long time ago. Once, I thought, it held the promise of a family and a lifetime of joy and companionship.

As the Midwest was abandoned the flow of grains, corn, potatoes and other major commodities dried up completely. As the cities of the interior emptied, the packaging and canning facilities closed. It was surprising that things had held up as well as they had. Though I didn't know it on that day as we rumbled across the city under a sky bluer than any I'd ever seen before (it's amazing what the elimination of a few hundred million automobiles can do for the air) my companions had probably been living on wild dog meat and vegetables and fruit gathered from abandoned gardens for weeks.

But I was only just waking from my pampered life at Hidey Hole, shocked out my slumbers by a sergeant that had shared my love of classic rock, played chess with me a hundred times, drank my bourbon, and was willing to kill me with no more apparent consideration than I would have given to the ants crushed under my feet when I walked through the woodlot back on the farm.

There was a small deer-skin pouch that I wore on a light chain around my neck. It had been a gift from someone I loved a long time ago. Once, I thought, it held the promise of a family and a lifetime of joy and companionship. Now it held a small vial containing an experimental serum that the provisional government of the United States in San Juan had no idea existed.

I lifted a hand to my chest. Feeling the pouch safe beneath my shirt I allowed myself to relax. We turned smoothly off the road and started down a long drive edged with stately oak trees and great expanses of lawn gone wild. It had been a long time and I wondered to myself if her eyes would still be as beautiful as they had been the last time I saw her.

They were. There were lines now at their corners and stress and fatigue had marked the delicate dark skin of her face, a face that I had once known better than I knew my own. The eyes themselves hadn't changed though. They sparkled with vitality and a vivid intelligence that I had never found again in

ten years of searching. I was at once delighted and more than a little frightened to discover that my memory had not increased her strength of character or physical beauty over the years but had, if anything, not done it justice. She was waiting under a willow tree behind the house.

The yard was a wild tangle of weeds and flowers. The grass was still a heavy lush green that the sun of August would soon dry to gold. At the back of the property, hidden from sight by another stand of oak, I could hear running water. It seems to me now, that I heard everything that night with a preternatural clarity that afternoon. The rush of the unseen water. The brush of leaf against leaf. Every word that passed over her lips as gentle as the breeze that tugged at our hair. And yet I doubt my memories of the entire affair. I have recalled her saying far too many things than she could have possibly said in the short time we had together.

She wasn't a devil. Her sin had been in loving her own people too much and forgetting that we are all only one people in the final analysis.

Each of the memories is equally powerful, clear and true. I can't unravel the weave to tell the honest from the imagined anymore. I have even told myself that the whole thing was an hallucination, a fiction brought on by the trauma of seeing Vincent murdered. Then her face returns to me, the smile once so quick now haunted and tired but the beauty undiminished, and I'm forced to admit that if it all was just a dream than this life and world I find myself in when I awaken each morning is of less substance than dream.

I will tell you what today, as I write this, I believe transpired. If tomorrow my story changes (though if all goes well there will be no one to question me, tomorrow or ever again) it is not that I mean to be difficult or that I am trying to mislead you. It is simply the nature of experience to avoid being imprisoned by anything so Lilliputian as words.

"The hawk comes out of his hole at last," she said as she looked up at me, though I had the certainty that she had somehow been watching me for quite some time, long before I'd ever ridden up the tree-lined drive or passed through the echoing halls of the ancient house at their end.

She smiled warmly and reached out her hand for mine, pulling me down next to her when I took it.

"Do you remember how you would sit out in the fields all day watching for hawks when we were kids?" She looked into my eyes and waited for me to answer her.

"I remember, Rena."

For a moment her smile vanished, then returned, though not so bright or easy as it had been.

"I have other names now, Ben. Devil. Bitch. Deliverer. Hero. More names than any one person has a right to. More names than I ever wanted." She sighed.

"Who do you say you are?" I asked her after a time.

She got up from the grass and began to stroll toward the oaks, beckoning for me to follow. Though my three companions, the warriors, were nowhere to be seen I had no doubt that they would be upon me if I so much as thought of harming her. I took her hand once again and the shadows of the tall trees closed over us.

"Some of the People call me Lightning Woman."

I laughed out loud. That the woman responsible for the Long Thunder should be called Lightning was too appropriate to ignore. Her own laughter joined mine.

"Right now I'm Rena, though. Your old, old (she made a face and hunkered over like a crone and we both laughed again) friend." Her smile faded and she looked at the leaves beneath our feet. "The woman who broke your heart."

She turned her face toward mine. Her eyes were bright and sad.

"I did break your heart. I know that. For the longest time I didn't let myself think about it. I'm sorry, Benjamin." Her voice became smaller. "You'll never know how much."

And there it was. I had fantasized about this moment for ten years. Played it over a thousand times in my imagination. What she would say. What I would. Now, faced with the reality, I was speechless and, God help me, even suspicious that it was all just a con.

"Why? Why now after all of this time?" I asked her.

"Because it's my last chance, isn't it? Because for another hundred years our people will be an ocean apart, and Ben, I just don't feel strong enough to wait that long."

She placed her hand on my chest. Her fingers touched the pouch that hung there and, seeing in her eyes the flash of recognition, it seemed to me that she would cry. Mastering her emotions she continued.

"You're the only one who ever understood the way I thought. The only one who could follow my research if not my reasons. The only one who could possibly put it all back the way it was.

"Benjamin, I need your friendship and I don't have the right to ask for it. I gave that away a long time ago when I thought there were more important things than love.""Always," I said, and it surprised me because I knew it was true. She looked into my face the longest time and I back into hers. Around us the world and everything in it receded into the distance until she was all that there was.

"Did I do a bad thing?" she asked me, breaking a silence that had been anything but empty. It wasn't what I had expected, though what I had expected I couldn't have said.

"Not about us. I mean about-" she fluttered her hands in a way that made me think of a small child and not the iron-willed geneticist I'd known and loved since we had been teenagers together.

"About the Long Thunder? About the virus?" I said, finishing the sentence for her. "You want to know if ripping three hundred million people up by their roots and sending them back as hated and unwanted strangers to the countries their three times great grandparents fled is wrong! Did you know the Chinese are shooting anyone who lacks a skill they have a need for? There's a war in Britain because to make room for all the returning whites they're throwing all the Asians and Africans out. There are a million dead in Calcutta and famine all over the damned place because there's no more wheat from North America!"

My voice was rising. I was working up a head of steam, pouring out all the frustration I felt for being locked up in a

government bunker for two years, for losing my home and the only country I ever knew, and, there was no denying it, for the rejection and hurt she had given me when she'd called our wedding off and disappeared without a word of explanation all those years before. Somehow my head cleared long enough that I saw her again. Not Rena Sand, renegade genius and Indian activist who'd managed to single-handedly change the course of world history and in the process become the most hated and reviled person who ever lived, but Rena Sand the woman.

The Rena Sand whom I, of all people, should have understood better. I knew right then, to my shame and embarrassment, that whatever charges and accusations I could think to throw at her she had already considered a thousand more. She wasn't a devil. Her sin had been in loving her own people too much and forgetting that we are all only one people in the final analysis. She had tried to set what she felt was an ancient wrong to right. Doing so she had discovered why Justice's sword is sharpened on both sides. When I began to speak again it was much more softly. Her face, as it had been since I'd started to rage, was turned away from me.

"Three days ago, I would have been able to answer you," I said. "Now I don't know. Someone I trusted tried to kill me today."

At that she turned and I could see her concern.

"How much could I be worth to the system? How much do the men and women who once ran this country really care about people like me? So I ask myself, is it America that died or just the wealth and privilege of a chosen few? Was there ever something called America at all?"

I sat under what had been a rich man's trees and listened to the river. Rena leaned closer and put her head on my shoulder. It felt right. Together, in silence, we watched the shadows lengthen.

I slept with her that night and awoke in the morning to find her gone. I dressed and started out on foot for the bay. She was waiting for me not far from the house.

"I thought you'd left," I said and kissed her.

"I did, but not in any way that's important," she answered, matching my stride. "My friends worry for my safety."

"I would never hurt you," I said. She touched my arm.

"Not all of my people like what has happened, you know? Some of them say that I'm a coward who didn't go far enough. Now, when the whites return, they will wipe us off the face of the earth."

"And what do the others say?"

"The others say that I'm too bold and that in a hundred years when the virus breaks down the whites will return and wipe us off the face of the earth. In the light of past history you can't really blame them. They fear me, Ben. They think that it would be better if I were dead and your employers agree."

I took her hand in mine.

"Where are you going to go?" I asked her.

"I don't know yet. The Thunder hasn't really even begun to take hold yet. Until it does there are plenty of Stayers who would shoot me as soon as look at me. In another year, it will be better. Everyone left will be three-quarters white, black, brown or yellow at most. I've always said that one Indian was worth three of anyone else." She tried to laugh, but it didn't come off well. She was frightened and very tired.

"One of my people will ride you down to the docks. They tell me your ship has waited." She kissed my cheek and as she did her fingers brushed over the deer skin pouch. "I trust you, Ben. Do the right thing."

An hour later, surrounded by heavily armed marines, I was bouncing over the water in one of the Esmeralde's motor launches. The sky on the horizon had darkened noticeably and the first drops of rain were falling before we reached the ship. By the time we had weighed anchor for San Juan that evening, it seemed as if all the water in heaven was falling on us. The last boat to leave America rounded the point and swung out past the final channel markers. If anybody noticed or cared we would never know.

It has been six months since I last saw her. Long Thunder rolled as I always knew that it would, returning all of North America to its original tenants. Somehow, despite the precautions, the virus has been carried over into Puerto Rico and the people have begun to die there in great numbers. Myself and a number of others have taken refuge in Havana. It's too late to leave now. There is no place or room for us and even if there were, after what has happened in San Juan there would be no country fool enough to accept us. For myself, I'm not worried. Today, I have injected myself with the serum I smuggled from Hidey-Hole. My body has become deaf to the Thunder.

I wonder if my evil is the greater. Rena only began the thing. She could never control it. I have the knowledge and here I stand, knee deep in innocent blood, and I do not share it.

I have managed to acquire for myself a small boat and some fuel. Tonight, I leave for the mainland. Perhaps I will die in the attempt as hundreds of Cuban Nationals died attempting the same crossing. The submarines of every nation patrol these waters and the coast, I know, has been mined. I no longer care. All that matters is that I return and that I lie once again in the arms of the woman I love. Just as those others crossed over looking for freedom so I go too.

Searching for freedom from this loneliness and longing that eats away at the very heart of my soul. Whatever the cost, tonight I am going home.

☆

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Guy Gavriel Kay

Fantasy writer's latest — an attempt to defeat Lord of the Rings laziness

By Peter Halasz

Guy Gavriel Kay, for those as yet unfamiliar with him or his work, is a family man, a lawyer, a radio and television scriptwriter, a poet and a best selling novelist with more than 1.4 million books in print translated into 14 languages. David Ketterer's landmark Canadian Science Fiction and Fantasy refers to him more simply as "a storyteller of genius".

IN CONVERSATION

A slight, elegantly spare figure, Kay made a few opening remarks to a Toronto crowd during a recent cross-country tour and then read to the enraptured crowd. Unexpectedly, I became witness to a literary love-fest; quite remarkable actually in this day of the vicarious, and often vacuous, special effects thrills found on cinema screens.

Those who've met or talked with Kay will know that he's an interesting and convivial conversationalist; a smile usually lurks at the margins of his mouth and every once in a while it beams forth. But one of the more notable aspects about talking with Kay is that when engaged he is fully engaged. When you have his attention you have his undivided attention. That is flattering as well as a touch disconcerting.

We met after he returned from a promotional tour. The following interview is excerpted from our discussion.

PH: The first three books you wrote, the Fionavar Tapestry, are high fantasy, but your subsequent work took a real turn, and to me, a much more interesting turn, can you tell us a bit about that?

GGK: I wrote Fionavar, in part, as a response to what was happening with the genre since Tolkien; that is, the genre had become destructive to any sense of development and creativity. It was my attempt to respond to what I saw as the barbarians invading the temple of fantasy.

After The Lord of the Rings became such a commercial success, so many people were doing lazy, derivative and purely commercially driven works in the field. In a really strong sense with Fionavar, I had said what I had to say; and I'd added what I could have added to the high-fantasy genre. There were certain elements that, when I looked at the genre when I sat down to do Fionavar, seemed to me to be missing from it and certain elements that seemed to me to be over-identified with it.

PH: Can you amplify for us?

GGK: Over-identified with the emphasis in the genre on what I saw as the tropes. The genre was coming to be identified with the tropes and not the underpinnings, not by the motifs. In other words, the enchanted stuff, the weapons,the battles the magic systems were coming to be the definition of the genre and I saw them as simply the tropes, the elements that are employed in the genre.

What was missing in general, for me, as a writer, were two significant things; one was the real sense of character — and you know you've never

Author Guy Gavriel Kay's latest novel, the second book of the diptych and the follow-up to Sailing To Sarantium, is scheduled for a spring release.

had a writer who didn't say that — but the genre didn't have it . . . with the exception of Stephen R. Donaldson. He made what I think was a gallant and ambitious attempt to play with some post-modern elements of the anti-hero.

The second was that the notion of interweaving post-Freudian awareness of myth and legend was never embedded within the genre. Tolkien and many of the others writing fantasy, in his time, were pre-Freudian in their consciousness. My generation, and all those after us, cannot be so. Nevertheless the genre seemed to be utterly lacking of any awareness of psychological underpinnngs of myth and legend forms. Fionavar is.

PH: Although Tolkien wrote in a pre-Freudian era, I think he was very aware of mythopoeic stereotypes; although not Freudian.

GGK: Completely so, but not in a psychological way, not Freudian at all. There's a difference between being clued into myth, to legend, to our myth, and legend, while being very uncomfortable with the notion say, with the sexuality that underlies myth and legend. That's what I'm getting at; the contribution of Freud is to suggest that these myths and legends are powerful for reasons that Tolkien would have been very uncomfortable with.

Freud gives us a doorway into why they have endured and where their power comes from. That's the added element; the post-Freudian element, if you will, in modern awareness.

PH: Getting back to the change in direction from high fantasy to historical fantasies, as distinguished from alternate histories, or, as you've previously described them "variations on a theme."

GGK: The departure was firstly very conscious in the sense that I didn't want to repeat myself and secondly an awareness that my own reading in the period after Fionavar, before beginning Tigana, was increasingly a reversion to something I was always interested in — which was history.

My own original orientation was resurfacing if you will, as a student of history at least as much as a student of myth and legend.

PH: I was going to ask this question later but ..... we've waited about four years for Sailing To Sarantium, I hope we won't have to wait another four for the second book of the diptych. How is it progressing?

GGK: It'll be out this spring. You have to do sales in a "season." Therefore it must come out in September or October; November's too late. If it doesn't come out in September or October they'll want to hold it over 'til February or March.

PH: I think you know that I love your work; I don't think that I personally could pay you a higher compliment than to say that I slowed down to read this book. To savour it.

GGK: Yes that is a compliment. One that I often hear from people is that "I raced through it once and then immediately started again slowly." I hear that too.

But you know, to reassure you, I really don't think that this book is a cliff-hanger. I honestly believe that this ends the story.

PH: Perhaps, after all as

Aurora finalists announced

The finalists for the Prix Aurora Awards have been announced. The Aurora's, Canada's national speculative fiction awards, recognize achievements in both official languages in literature, art, media and organizational work by Canadian professionals and by fans in the areas of science fiction and fantasy.

To vote, you must be a Canadian citizen or a landed immigrant residing in Canada. A supporting membersip is $10 and a voting membership is $5.

The voting deadline is June 30. The winners will be announced July 15 as part of Toronto Trek 2000.

Ballots can be obtained by sending a S.A.S.E to: Prix Aurora Awards 2000, 4A-385 Fairway Road S., Box 213, Kitchener, Ont., N2C 2N9 or at
www.sentex.net/~dmullin/aurora

This year's finalists are:

Best Long-Form Work in English — 1998/1999

Beholder's Eye, Julie E. Czerneda; Brown Girl in the Ring, Nalo Hopkinson; Flashforward, Robert J. Sawyer, Starfish, Peter Watts; Bios, Robert Charles Wilson and Death Drives A Semi, Edo van Belkom.

Meilleur livre en français — 1998/1999

L'Aile du papillon, Joël Champetier, Le Livre des chevaliers, Yves Meynard; Sur le seuil by Patrick Senécal and Samiva de Frée by Francine Pelletier.

Best Short-Form Work in English — 1999

The Emperor's Old Bones, Gemma Files; Erratic Cycles, Mark Leslie; Speaking Sea, Sally McBride; Any Port in a Storm, Mark Rayner; Stream of Consciousness, Robert J. Sawyer; State of Disorder, Douglas Smith; Symphony, Douglas Smith; Plato's Mirror, Robert Charles Wilson.

Meilleure nouvelle en français — 1999

Souvenirs du Saudade Express, Éric Gauthier; Soldats de sucre, Yves Meynard; Passions étouffées sous la pierre cendreuse, Jean-Louis Trudel.

Best Work in English (Other) — 1999

Aurora Awards, Edo van Belkom; Northern Frights 5, Don Hutchison, ed.; On Spec, Jena Snyder, general ed; Parsec, Chris Krejlgaard, ed; and TransVersions, Dale L. Sproule.

Meilleur ouvrage en français (autre) — 1999

L'Année de la Science-Fiction et du Fantastique Québécois 1997, Claude Janelle et al. ; Historique des Pulps québécois, Jean-Louis Trudel; Le XIXe siècle fantastique en Amérique française, Claude Janelle et al.; and Solaris, Joël Champetier,

Artistic Achievement — 1999

James Beveridge, Jean-Pierre Normand, Bernard Reischl, DLSproule, Larry Stewart, Ronn Sutton and Terry Pallot

Fan Achievement (Organizational)

Brian A. Davis (inCONsequential); Cathy Palmer-Lister (MonSFFA); Lloyd Penney (Toronto in 2003 worldcon bid); Yvonne Penney (Toronto in 2003 worldcon bid); Bernard Reischl (KAG/Kanada); and Ann Methe (Con*cept).

Fan Achievement (Other)

Made in Canada, Don Bassie (Web site) [www.geocities.com/canadian_sf]; Lloyd Penney (fan writing); The Road to Roswell, Karen Linsley & Lloyd Landa (music CD); Larry Stewart (entertainer); and Jason Taniguchi (one-man SF parody shows).

Fan Achievement (Fanzine)

CONtract, John Mansfield, ed. & publisher [newsletter]; Disrupter, Bernard Reischl, ed. (KAG/Kanada) [clubzine]; OSFS Statement, Joel Polowin, ed. / Dwight Williams, ed. / Sharon C.P. Fall, ed. (Ottawa SF Society clubzine); Voyageur, Karen Bennett, ed. (USS Hudson Bay/IDIC clubzine);Warp, Lynda Pelley, ed. (MonSFFA clubzine).

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the creator you do know better than I. But, I didn't want to leave this universe, this creation. I had the feeling, an impression, that the diptych will be a unitary work in two parts.

GGK: Well, I'll tell you about the splitting. It'll be clearer, I think, when the second book is out. But some things, I think, are clear right now. Sailing To Sarantium, the title, has a meaning within the context of the book. It's a journey, it is one man's story basically.

All the other crowd and cast of characters play subsidiary roles to his journey. It begins with one man behind walls, ie. city walls and personal walls; he's in grief and mourning and he's walled himself off from personal interaction. The story takes him outside of those walls. Walls had a hugely significant meaning in late antiquity, the period I'm writing about.

The story takes Crispin, a pampered late Roman who likes bathouses, wine, good conversation, massages and so on, out into a near wintry wilderness — a desolate forested place, dangerous and empty. Where, when you come to an inn, you don't order the sausage because it actually might be someone's aunt. He's out from the walls, and certain things happen to him in the wilderness.

He finishes the journey coming to other walls where there are a completely different set of dangers. The book describes the ark of that journey and ends at the finish of that journey. There are other things, just offstage, that the reader knows will happen to these people. But the second book in the diptych, by the nature of the place, cannot be so much about the one man. There are too many people; he's now in a crowded, walled-in, bustling city. Too many people need to share the stage once he gets there. The narrative devices will have to change, the structure will have to change. So, there are many reasons why it falls into two parts.

PH: OK. I'm reassured. There are many different aspects to writing a novel. The research, I suppose is the outline

GGK: (headshake.)

PH: You don't outline? You just start?

GGK: I know the characters, the setting and the overall themes. I have a general sense of where I'm going to take them, but I don't know the stops along the way. It's a discovery for me as well as the reader.

PH: So you write in sequence, one chapter at a time.

I have a general sense of where I'm going to take them, but I don't know the stops along the way. It's a discovery for me as well as the reader.

GGK: I write in sequence, yes.

PH: Reading your work, the punctilious choice of word and image, I assume that you must do major rewriting.

GGK: A tremendous amount of rewriting. It "layers up." My writing method, to use a metaphor, is a painterly one. I "layer up" the story, because I'm discovering where the scene is going; the first time through is essentially to write the scene. Then I'll stop and take a deep breath, and the next morning or that afternoon, I'll look at the written scene and ask myself: 'How do I flesh this out?

'What details do I need?" Details are critical. 'What nuances will make this work?' And it's layered up, sometimes 10 or 15 times for a scene. It's that painterly thing of a brush stroke on top of a brush stroke, sometimes even removing brush strokes.... People often talk about the secondary characters in my books ..... the intensity of the supporting characters and not just the main ones. I think some of the reason for the successful realisation of those characters is this layering. Because, in the process, I find ways to add detail and dimension to the supporting cast.

PH: You used to write for radio, and

Continued on Page 67

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authors such as Julie E. Czerneda and Anne Knight will be available shortly, as well as books from C.J. Cherryh, Charles Ingrid, Elizabeth Forrest and Emily Drake will also be sold at the peanutpress.com site, with works by other DAW authors being released on an ongoing basis.

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Horror writer shares knowhow

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Recent & Upcoming Releases

The following are books received by Parsec from U.S. publishers or their Canadian distributors since the previous issue of the magazine was distributed. Please note that release dates are subject to change. HC denotes hard cover. TP denotes trade paperback. ☞ denotes that a review appears in the current issue, ▲ denotes recommended. When possible both U.S. and Canadian suggested retail prices are included.

Eater; Gregory Benford;HarperCollins/Eos; hc	**May**
In the Upper Room and Other Likely Stories; Terry Bisson; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**May**
New York Nights; Eric Brown; Orion/Gollancz; hc	**May**
Fortress of Dragons; C.J. Cherryh; HarperCollins/Eos; hc	**May**
The Doors of Death and Life; Brenda W. Clough; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**May**
Imagination Fully Dilated, Volume 2: The Literated Works of Alan M. Clark; Elizabeth Engstrom. ed.; FD Publishing; hc	**May**
The Gate of Fire; Thomas Harlan,; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**May**
The Tower at Stony Wood; Patricia A. McKillip,; Ace; hc	**May**
Spindle's End; Robin McKinley; Penguin Putnam; hc	**May**
King of the City; Michael Moorcock; Simon & Schuster/Scribner UK; hc	**May**
Saturn's Race; Larry Niven & Steven Barne; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**May**
Needle in the Groove; Jeff Noon; Transworld/Anchor UK, tp	**May**
Marrow; Robert Reed; Tor/HB Fenn, hc	**May**
The Fountains of Youth; Brian Stableford; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**May**
Look to Windward; Iain M. Banks; Little Brown/Orbit; hc	**June**
The Crown of Silence; Storm Constantine; Orion/Gollancz; hc/tpb	**June**
Vanishing Acts; Datlow, Ellen, ed.; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**June**
Forests of the Heart; Charles de Lint; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**June**
Year's Best SF 5; David G. Hartwell ed.; HarperCollins/Eos	**June**
Calculating God; Robert J. Sawyer; Tor/HB Fenn, hc	**June**
The Jazz; Melissa Scott; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**June**
Chimera; Will Shetterly, Tor/HB Fenn, hc	**June**
Tangled up in Blue; Joan Vinge; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**June**
The Year's Best Science Fiction: Seventeenth Annual Collection; Gardner Dozois ed.; St. Martin's Griffin; hc/tp	**July**
Hunted; James Alan Gardne; HarperCollins/Eos; hc	**July**
Prophecy; Elizabeth Haydon, Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**July**
Probability Moon; Nancy Kress; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**July**
A Storm of Swords; George R.R. Martin; HarperCollins/Voyager, hc	**July**
Harry Potter and the Doomspell Tournament; J.K. Rowling; Scholastic/Levine, hc	**July**
Major Ingredients; Eric Frank Russell, NESFA Press, cln, hc	**July**
Magic Terror: Seven Tales; Peter Straub; Random House, cln, hc	**July**
Wheel of the Infinite; Martha Wells;HarperCollins/Eos, hc	**July**
Sister Emily's Lightship and Other Stories; Jane Yolen; Tor/HB Fenn, cln, hc	**July**
Faith of the Fallen; Terry Goodkind; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**August**
Ship of Destiny; Robin Hobb; Bantam Spectra; hc	**August**
The Perseids and Other Stories; Robert Charles Wilson; Tor/HB Fenn; hc	**August**
The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror; Ellen Datlow & Terri Windling, eds; St. Martin's Griffin; hc/tp	**August**

Stewart taps into Texas history (sort of) for Galveston

For the last decade, Sean Stewart has been intertwining readers in tales of magic.

This month, Stewart's latest novel, Galveston, was released.

The novel's underpinnings are a historical event in the Texas city's history.

On Sept. 7, 1900, a hurricane roared off the Gulf of Mexico. The storm sent a 20-foot tidal surge over the city — the highest point of which is just eight-feet tall.

In the novel, Galveston finds itself cleansed by magic during the Mardi Gras in 2004. The event results in the birth of a variety of strange creatures — like scorpions the size of dogs and a widow who eats her victims. The flood of magic divides the city-island into two sections, one based in reality and the other based in an endless carnival.

In essence, man is trapped on an island in an alien sea.

"It's an easy to handle metaphor," Stewart explained. "And it has a nice parallel to what really happened to Galveston during the early part of the century."

One of the novel's characters that Stewart points to as an example of the effect of the magic on reality is a beautiful poker player who keeps losing to luck until the player ends up being damned to hell.

Where some fantasy writers opt to stay with the tried-and-true formulas of swords, giants and warriors, Stewart opts to follow a more philosophical path.

"Galveston shows that there are no guarantees in life," Stewart said. "Existentialism is the world's reaction to the stress of no longer believing in an omnipotent deity.

"The scope of holocaust causes a lot of people to question their beliefs and force them to define their reasons for doing things."

"The genre is like a model kit. If all the pieces fit together, you gain a sense of wonder at what you created."

Stewart's ability to fit such complex philosophical arguments and elements into his novels is one of his strengths as a writer.

"The genre is like a model kit," Stewart explains. "If all the pieces fit together, you gain a sense of wonder at what you created.

"But you can also customize the kit without losing its identity.".

And Stewart excels at customizing "the kit."

He has melded elements of mysteries, philosophy and traditional elements of fantasy. The product has created that sense of wonder because the pieces have fit together so well.

A habitual note-taker, Stewart keeps tabs on ideas or questions that occur to him. Over the course of time, Stewart tries to see if these ideas or revelations have any relationship to each other.

"It's just a flotsam of ideas and I keep trying to fit them together," he explains. "When enough of them fit together, I have the basis of a story."

Galveston represents such a melding and draws from Stewart's Texas roots.

Stewart was born in Lubbock, and moved to Edmonton, Alta., after his parents separated when he was three.

When he was seven, Stewart received a copy of the Hobbit. It was a turning point for the youngster. Stewart became a voracious reader with an affinity toward adventure stories — especially ones involving swordplay.

In fact, swords became a large part of his life when he took up fencing. By the time he was 11, he was proficient enough to win the Alberta Boys Under 12 Provincial Championship in foil.

But he left the sport early in high school because his new coach, by his own description, ran the class like a Bulgarian military academy.

He then turned his attention to the theatre and took part in a number of high school productions during the following years.

After graduating from the University of Alberta in 1987, Stewart spend several years in Vancouver, B.C., before returning to Texas and eventually settling down in California.

Drawing on his knowledge of the theatre, he composed a work which helped vault him into the upper echelon of fantasy and science fiction writers.

He scored a minor breakthrough in 1992 with his fifth novel, Passion Play.

The novel, published by Tesseract Books, is set in a world where cities are dying and vigilante groups are killing "sinners."

Freelance hunters are encouraged to capture criminals whose executions are televised. But one of these freelancers can see and feel the pain of sinners and decides to change the system.

"There are certainly theatrical elements to the story. It's sort of a murder mystery

Despite a limited print run, the novel found its way into the hands of an Ace sales rep, who presented it to one of the company's senior editors.

Suddenly Stewart found himself with a book deal.

From there he scored with a succession of fan favourites such as Nobody's Son, Resurrection Man and Mockingbird.

☆

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Caribbean folktales inspire Hopkinson's latest

It's been a wild couple of years for Nalo Hopkinson.

Last fall, the Toronto-based author won the John W. Campbell Award (sponsored by Dell Magazines for the best new writer of 1997 or 1998) for her first novel, Brown Girl in the Ring.

Hopkinson's novel also was the 1998 winner of the Warner Aspect First Novel Contest.

With her second novel, The Midnight Robber, Hopkinson draws from Caribbean folklore for her inspiration.

"It came from Jamaican legend," Hopkinson said during a recent interview in Toronto. "There are three folktales I created and embedded in the science fiction story.

"One of them, in some ways, is a retelling of a Jamaican legend of a person who really existed called Three-Fingered Jack."

The novel was released. earlier this month.

"I wrote the story as I imagined telling the story of this young woman as if she had a similar history to Three-Fingered Jack."

The novel is set on a planet that has been colonized by Caribbean peoples. A girl, Tan-Tan, is caught in a battle between her father and mother when her father kidnaps her and takes her to another dimension called Half-Way Tree

Growing up in the other world, Tan-Tan must come to grips with her predicament. While in Half-way Tree, Tan-Tan takes solace in the memories of carnivals and of a character known as the Midnight Robber.

The robber is Trinidad's equivalent to Robin Hood. Tan-Tan becomes so identified with the character, that she becomes the robber through folk tales.

"You know how folk tales grow by world of mouth, you tell a story and gets more entrenched," Hopkinson explains. "People start to tell stories about her as she takes on the midnight robber persona.

"So it's really about what's reality and how she comes to terms with how she has become trapped in what she is."

Compared to her first novel, Midnight Robber deals with more complex issues, offers readers more layered characters and continues Hopkinson's effective use of language — a strong point for Brown Girl in the Ring, according to some critics.

"It tends to cause more raised eyebrows in science fiction, but the body of Caribbean and colonial literature that I'm used to , using venaculars is not a big deal," Hopkinson explained.

One of the complex themes which resonates through the book is the displacement of people. Again, it's a theme that's drawn from Hopkinson"s exposure to Caribbean literature and the prevailing influence of slavery on the culture.

"That's the essential image (of the novel)," she said. "The Midnight Robber always made up speeches for the carnival about being the son of an African prince who was kidnapped and who had gotten away and who stole to survive."

For her third novel, Hopkinson will be making a departure from science fiction and trying her hand at fantasy.

And unlike her usual writing practice, where she writes a story and pretty much learns what happens as she progresses through the work — much as a reader would — Hopkinson knows how her third book will end since she had to submit a proposal to her publisher.

She's just not saying how.

☆

While many fantasy writers use the flavour du jour (such as Celtic legend) as the underpinning for their work, Marie Jakober uses the history and legends of the European continent for the foundation of **The Black Chalice** (Edge).

The story is a reminiscence of Paul, a monk who looks back at the events of 31 years earlier when his master, a Crusader knight by the name of Karelian of Lys, gives up everything for the love of a pagan witch, Raven. Karelian had returned from the Crusades to find that his home was in ruins and filled with disillusionment at war and with the dealings of his church. Because of this disillusionment and his love for Raven, Karelian is willing to undertake a journey for the truth.

Rather than follow so many other fantasy writers who churn out formulaic pap, Jakober presents a stunningly rich work steeped in metaphor, historical detail, imagery and, best of all, imagination in The Black Chalice.

In short, it is a masterpiece.

In 25 years, Jakober has produced five novels. It is an output which is maddening from a reader's perspective. But is one which demonstrates that what is lost in quantity is made up in quality.

— Lars Johansen

☆ ☆ ☆

Midnight Robber (Tor/HB Fenn) is a fine follow-up to Nalo Hopkinson's well-received (an understatement) first novel, Brown Girl in the Ring. And what a sophomore effort it is.

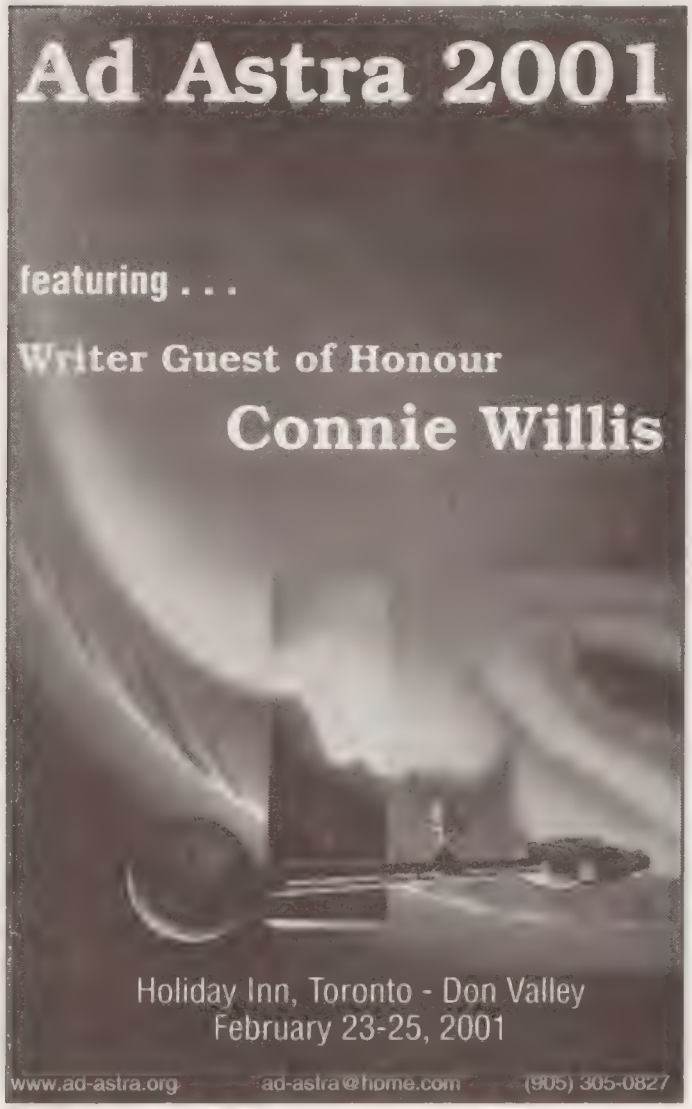
If anything, Hopkinson's command as a storyteller has elevated even higher.

In Midnight Robber, Hopkinson enfuses the Trinidad legend with a wondrous sense of fantasy.

The story takes place on the planet of Toussaint. During the celebration Tan-Tan's father commits a deadly crime and is forced to flee with his daughter to a world called New Halfway Tree. The planet is inhabited with outcasts and creatures which had only been described in Toussaint folklore.

Over the course of time, Tan-Tan becomes part of folklore herself. She must also overcome the sense of separation and alienation from those she holds dear. It is withπ this latter aspect that Hopkinson manages to create a strong emotional parallel to many readers in a globalized modern society,

— Chris Krejgaard



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Pangaea, Book II: Imperium Afire	Lisa Mason

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Cryptonomicon	Neal Stephenson
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Realware	Rudy Rucker

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Year's Best Fantasy and Horror	Ellen Datlow, Terri Windling, eds.

droid.

The two main characters are humans who have been transformed into identical billion-dollar droids.

Adam is a heroic figure who was mortally injured when he was trying to recover stolen jewels. Adaman, who was a criminal before he became a droid, is the villain who killed Adam in his original human form.

FILMOGRAPHY

MOVIES:
Held Up
Blackjack
Bram Stoker's
Showbuilder
Specimen
State Park

TELEVISION:
All My Children
F/X
Due South
Charmed
Amazon
Psi Factor
Highlander
Sirens
Earth: Final Conflict

For Jackson, who landed the role on the strength of a demo tape, it was a challenging acting assignment. He had to play both characters in markedly different ways.

"They needed someone who could be wholesome and who could be villainous," Jackson said. "They knew from my past work, that I could do it.

"The only worry they had when I arrived in Los Angeles was that I would have some sort of an accent (due in large part to his appearance as professional hockey player, Luc Cassoulet on Arli$$)."

The recent projects were ideal for Jackson.

"I love science fiction and I watch science fiction," he said.

"In fact, I'd say a good portion of the television that I watch is the Space channel (Canada's science fiction network)."

you've written for television. You still write scripts, do you not? Didn't you write the script for Robertson Davies' What's Bred in the Bone?

GGK: That's right.

What's Bred in the Bone is in financing limbo right now. The producers are looking for offshore money. It's a very expensive show, it's a major book and it's a major story — and the kind of funding needed to do it properly can't be generated within Canada alone in the current economic climate.

PH: Does one form of writing inform the other? Does one enrich the other, and, is it a two-way street?

GGK: For me, I would say that the way it works is that the scriptwriting serves wonderfully well as a bridge out of one book to getting ready to begin the next one. I'm always worried that the last book will bleed into the next one, the diction, the style . . .the rhythms.

Kay's Bibliography

1985	The Summer Tree
1986	The Wandering Fire
1986	The Darkest Road
1990	Tigana
1992	A Song for Arbonne
1995	The Lions of Al-Rassan
1999	Sailing to Sarantium

PH: Rhythms?

GGK: The prologue of the Sarantine mosaic was written as a mosaic. Two reviewers have caught that already. It was written to be a strong 'tile' of a charioteer, a strong 'tile' of a senator . . . strong contrasting 'tiles.' That's the art form of mosaic; you don't blend colours — you contrast them to form an illusion when you back away. When you get too close you can't see it clearly, which is a feeling the reader should have in the prologue. Without going into detail, the style of this book, is influenced by the metaphor and the protagonist as a mosaicist. If I were to start a new novel right after this I'd have the vestigial worry that the rhythm and style I'd evolved over 800 or 900 pages might bleed into the next.

But Venture's season ended and Vaughn left the program before the plans for the segment left the drawing board. When the film board requested submissions from filmmakers, Vaughn dusted off his old idea and submitted it.

"We were looking for something that was fresh," Basmajian said.

It didn't hurt that the subject matter was a high-profile Canadian.

"We are mandated to put Canada to Canadians and abroad," she explained. "And we look for intrinsically Canadian subjects who also have international appeal.

Even with the principal filming completed, Basmajian and Vaughn are unsure how the final product will appear on the screen.

The documentary will undergo an evolution during the editing process as the filmmakers look for a turning point on which to hinge the film.

One potential turning point is the differences between McFarlane's professional and personal lives that became clear during the interview process.

"There's an apparent contradiction with his personal life," said Vaughn. "He manages to have a 9-to-5 day, which is rare in his profession, go home and be a dotting father."

Vaughn also noticed during the interviews that his subject, the corporate rebel, might not be as rebellious as he once was.

"To a certain extent, it's a sort of mellowing. I think he's come to the realization that in the corporate world there are reasons why you do some things," Vaughn explains. "But he's still trying to bring the freshness and the spontaneity to it. I think that's intrinsic in it being a private company.

When it is completed, the filmmakers hope to tell McFarlane's story from a number of perspectives — the fly on the wall, Basmajian calls it — and includes interviews with comic-industry personalities such as Tom deFalco, Erik Larsen, as well as McFarlane's family and friends from Calgary and college.

"The wonderful thing with documentaries like this one is that it presents facets of a person's life that the audience is not privy to," Basmajian said.

Spring schedule

Eastern Time	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	Pacific Time
6:00am	Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea					Space News.	Canadian	3:00am
6:30am.						Serials	Document.	3:30am.
7:00am.	Ray Bradbury							4:00 am
7:30am.	Prisoners of Gravity							4:30am.
8:00am.	Quantum Leap					Alien	Space	5:00am.
8:30am.						Nation	Precinct	5:30am.
9:00am.	War of the Worlds					Space	Battlestar	6:00am.
9:30am						Precinct	Galactica	6:30am
10am	Star Trek							7:00am
10:30am								7:30am
11:00am	Highlanders					Voyage to the	Capt. Power	8:00am
11:30am						Bottom - Sea	Elec. Playgrd	8:30a.m
Noon	Ray Bradbury							9:00am
12:30pm	Weird Science							9:30am
1:00pm	Alfred Hitchcock Presents					Green Hornet	Twilight Zone	10:00am
1:30pm	Batman					Twilight Zone	Serials	10:30am
2:00pm	Alien Nation	Nowhere Man	American Gothic	Dark Skies	Space Above and Beyond	Movie	Movie	11:00am
2:30pm								11:30am
3:00pm	Babylon 5							noon
3:30pm								12:30pm
4:00pm	Star Trek					Space Above	Space.	1:00pm
4:30pm						And Beyond	Specials	1:30pm
5:00pm	Quantum Leap					The	Space	2:00pm
5:30pm						Crow	Specials	2:30am
6:00pm	Highlander					Battlestar		3:00pm
6:30pm						Galactic	Beastmaster	3:30pm
7:00pm	Babylon 5					The Lost	Earth	4:00pm
7:30pm						World	Final Conflict	4:30pm
8:00pm	Lost Archives	Sliders				Relic		5:00pm
8:30pm						Hunter	Movie	5:30pm
9:00pm	Lexx	Miniseries	First Wave	Angel	Good vs. Evil	Movie		6:00pm
9:30pm								6:30pm
10:00pm	Star Trek: Deep Space Nine						movie	7:00pm
10:30pm								7:30pm
11:00pm	X-Files					Movie		8:00pm
11:30pm								8:30pm
midnight	Movie	Movie	Movie	Movie	Perversions of Sc.		Beauty and the Beast	9:00pm
12:30am					Movie			9:30pm
1:00am								10:00pm
1:30am						Movie		10:30pm
2:00am	X-Files						Paranormal prog.	11:00pm
2:30am					X-Files			11:30pm
3:00am	Babylon 5							midnight
3:30am					Babylon 5	Space Island		12:30am
4:00am	Deep Space Nine							1:00am
4:30am					Deep Space Nine	VR5		1:30am
5:00am	Twilight Zone							2:00am
5:30am	Prisoners of Gravity							2:30am

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Keycon 17: Hotel; TBA-Winnipeg, Man. Scheduled guests:Michael Sheard, Igor Kordey. Registration: $30 until Dec. 31, $40 until April 30, $50 at the door. Information: (206) 668-3631 or P.O. Box 3128, Winnipeg, MB. R3C 4E6.

JULY 7-9

A Distant Shore II — 11th Annual Beauty and the Beast Convention: Hilton Burbank Airport, Burbank, CA. Scheduled guests: TBA. Registration: until Nov. 30 $110 (US), until April 30 $120 (US) at the door $130 (US). Information: Carousels and Caverns Community. PO Box 1851, Studio City, CA 91614, LA2K@aol.com or http://members.aol.com//la2k/la2khome.html

AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 4

CHICON 2000 — World Science Fiction Convention: Hyatt Regency Chicago, Ill. Scheduled guests:Ben Bova, Jim Baen, Bob Eggleton, Harry Turtledove. Registration: Members Attending $135 US, Supporting $40 US. Information: PO Box 642057, Chicago, IL, 60664, chi2000@chicon.org or http://www.chicon.org/

OCTOBER 26-29

26th World Fantasy Convention: Omni Bayfront Hotel, Corpus Christi, TX. Scheduled guests: K.W. Jeter, John Crowley. Registration NA. Information: PO Box 27277, Austin, TX 78755, fduartejr@aol.com.

2001

MAY 25-28

Costume Con 19: Westin Hotel, Calgary, Alta. Scheduled Guests: TBA; Registration: NA. Information: Box 20001, Bow Valley Postal Outlet, 205-5th Ave SW, Calgary, Alta., T2P 4H3 or capsam@nucleus.com.

JUNE 16-18

AnimeNorth: Ramada Airport East, Toronto, Ont. Scheduled guests: Ben Dunn, . Registration:$20 until Jan.1, $25 until May 1. $35 at the door. Information: info@animenorth.com or www.animenorth.com

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Will Sylvester
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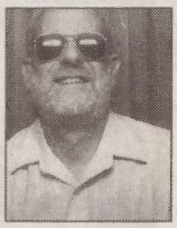
Who's Who

Mark Leon Collins entering his 40-somethings, Mark Collins is happily single and lives upon the Hampshire borders in England. He has been writing steadily over the past 18 years with protracted bouts of lethargy rather than writers' block and has a failed novel contract to his credit. He otherwise has had over a dozen short stories published by various indie-press magazines and is looking to interest a publisher with his three completed Fantasy novels which athough connected are not a trilogy. His occupations have all uncannily been transport orientated but as diverse as his short stories; truck-driving, sales and admin. appointments and self-employments - far removed from his ambition to settle upon the uncomfortable ledges of an established novelist.

Paul Bates I've been writing since the early 1960's. I make my living in construction management, and dream about becoming a full time writer. My more recent publishing credits include The Chrysalis Reader, Lynx Eye, Literal Latte, Indigenous Fiction, Strange Wonderland and The Darklands Project. I have short stories pending at TransVersions, Fantasque, Reality's Escape, and I've just signed a contract to have my first (actually the fifth I've written) novel published by 7-Realms, called "Song of the Seadragon."



Dan Knight is a southern Ontario-based writer.

Joanne Hansen is freelance artist, born in Newmarket, Ont. She has been doing comission pieces her whole life, but has just gone professional last year under the business name Rummble Strips. Hansen now lives in Barrie, Ont., as a freelance science fiction and fantasy artist with her three cats and her wonderful husband. This is her first published piece (and hopefully not her last.) If you have any questions or a commission idea, please contact her at rummblestrips@home.com.

Larry Desousa is Parsec's resident purveyor of comic hilarity.

Sandy Carruthers is a Prince Edward Island professor and artist. He is best known as one of the originators of the Men in Black the comic series. His illustration for **The Long Thunder** is his second contribution to Parsec.

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12 Heritage Square
Delran, N.J. 08705
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Fax: (856) 461-6339
Legendary1@home.com

DREAM POD 9, Inc.
5000 Iberville, Suite 332
Montreal, Qc. H2H 2S6
www.dp9.com

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